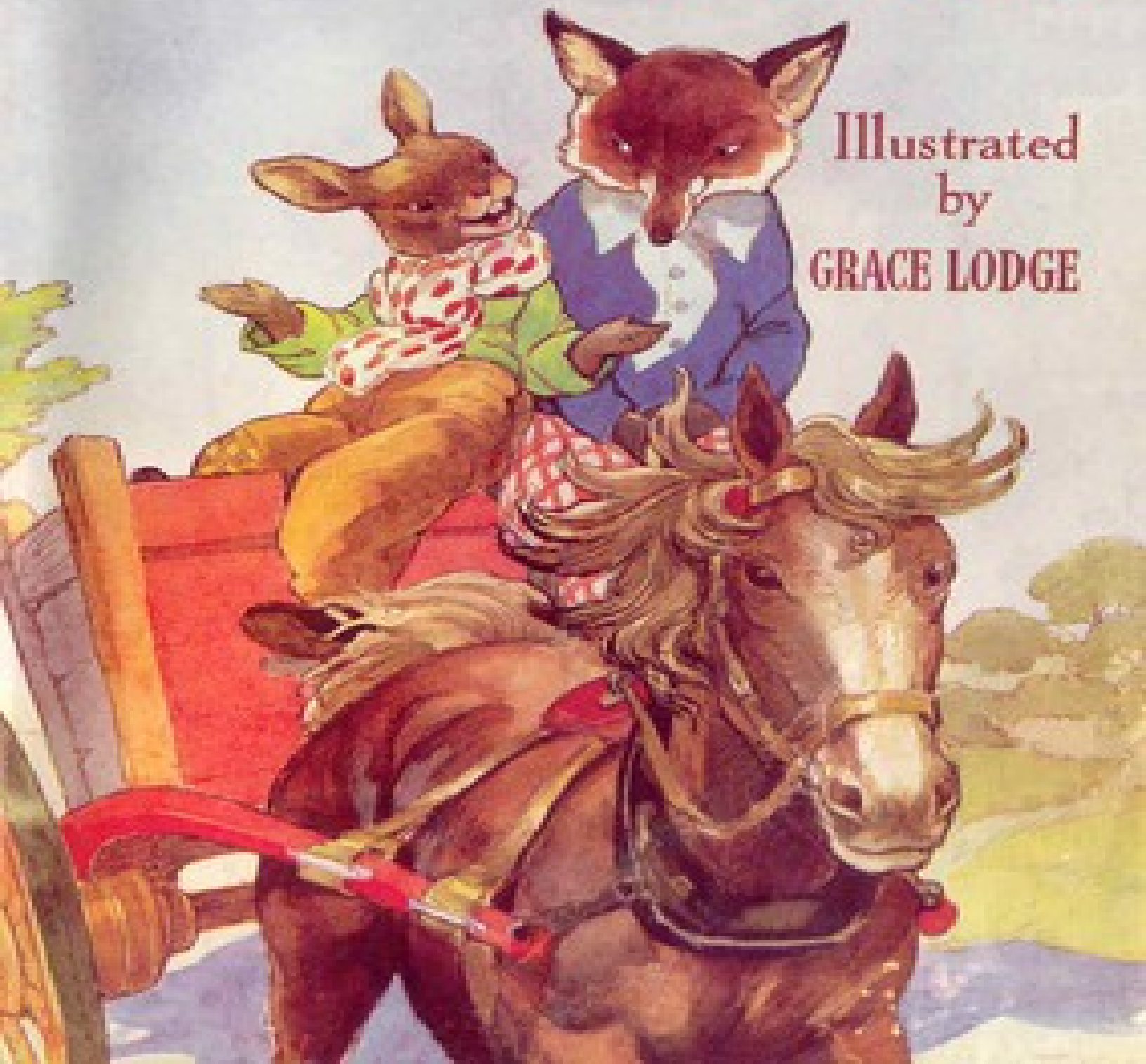
Enid Blyton's

BRER RABBIT BOOK



Illustrated by

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I. Brer Fox is Too Smart

ONE DAY when Brer Fox went calling on Miss Meadows and the girls, who should he find sitting up there but old Brer Rabbit? There he was, just as cheeky as you please! He was teasing the girls and making them giggle, and nobody seemed very pleased to see old Brer Fox.

“You must excuse us for making such a gigglement, Brer Fox,” said Miss Meadows, “but Brer Rabbit does say such funny things!”

Brer Fox felt sure that the funny things Brer Rabbit had been saying were all about *him*. But he joined in the fun, and soon he was feeling all splimmy-splammy. All the same, he kept his eye on Brer Rabbit, and Brer Rabbit soon began to feel it would be better for him to leave before Brer Fox did.

So after a while Brer Rabbit looked out towards the sunset and said : “Now then, folks and friends, I must say good-bye. Clouds are coming up yonder, and before we know it, the rain will be pouring and the grass will be growing!”

Well, Brer Fox looked out too, and said : “Yes, the clouds are coming up, and I expect I’d better be getting along myself, Miss Meadows. I don’t want to get my best Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes wet.”

Miss Meadows and the girls begged them to stay, but they had both made up their minds to go, and after a while they set out.

Well, whilst they were going down the big road, talking to one another, and Brer Rabbit was a-wondering how he could get rid of Brer Fox, Brer Fox suddenly stopped right in the road and said:

“Run, run, Brer Rabbit! Look here! There are Mr. Dog’s tracks and, what’s more, they are just freshly made!”

Brer Rabbit sidled up to look. “Huh!” he said, “that footprint would never fit Mr. Dog’s foot! And what’s more, Brer Fox, I know who made that track, and I knew him long, long ago!”

“Tell me his name, Brer Rabbit,” begged Brer Fox.

Brer Rabbit laughed. “If I’m not mistaken, Brer Fox, the poor creature that made that track is Cousin Wildcat, for sure.”

“How big is he, Brer Rabbit?” asked Brer Fox, still scared.

“Oh, he’s just about your height, Brer Fox,” said Brer Rabbit. Then Brer Rabbit pretended to be talking to himself. “Tut, tut, tut! It’s mighty funny I should come across Cousin Wildcat in this part of the world. To be sure, to be sure! Many’s the time I saw my old grand-daddy kick and cuff Cousin Wildcat till I felt really sorry for him. If you want any fun, Brer Fox, right now is the time to get it!”

“How am I going to have any fun with Cousin Wildcat?” said Brer Fox.

“Easy enough,” said Brer Rabbit. “just go after old Cousin Wildcat, run at him and lam him round!”

Brer Fox scratched his ear and said: “Brer Rabbit, I’m afraid. His footprint is too much like Mr. Dog’s.”

Brer Rabbit sat right down in the toad and shouted and laughed. “Shoo, Brer Fox!” he said. “Who’d have thought you’d be so frightened? Just come and look at this track closely. Can you see the mark of any claws anywhere?”

Well, Brer Fox looked—and as cats always draw in their claws when they go walking, of course Cousin Wildcat hadn’t left any sign of his at all. And Brer Fox nodded his head and said: “Yes, you’re right, Brer Rabbit. There is no sign of any claws there.”

“Well, then,” said Brer Rabbit, “if he hasn’t got any claws, how can he hurt you?”

“What about his teeth, Brer Rabbit?” said Brer Fox.

“Shoo, Brer Fox! Creatures that gnaw the bark of trees, won’t bite *you*!”

Well, Brer Fox took another good look at the tracks, and then he and Brer Rabbit set out to follow them. They went down the lane and across the turnip-patch, and down a drain and up a big ditch. Brer Rabbit did the tracking, and every time he saw a footprint he shouted:

“Here’s another track, and no claw there! Here’s another track, and no claw there!”

They kept on and they kept on, till by and by they came up to the creature himself—Cousin Wildcat. Brer Rabbit shouted out in a mighty

biggitty voice : “Heyo there! What are you doing?”

The creature looked round but he didn’t say a word. “Huh!” said Brer Rabbit, “you needn’t look so sulky! We’ll make you talk before we’ve done with you. Come now! What are you doing here?”

The wildcat rubbed himself against a tree just like a house-cat rubs himself against a chair, but he didn’t say a word. Brer Rabbit went on shouting.

“What have you come pestering us for? We haven’t been pestering you! You may think I don’t know who you are, but I do. You’re the same Cousin Wildcat that my grand-daddy used to kick and cuff when you wouldn’t answer. I’ll just tell you I’ve got a better man here than my grand-daddy ever was, and I promise you he’ll make you talk!”

The wildcat leaned harder against the tree, and his eyes gleamed, and he ruffled up and bristled, but still he didn’t say a word. Brer Rabbit didn’t go a step nearer—no, he was leaving all that to Brer Fox—but he turned to Brer Fox and said: “Go on, Brer Fox, and if he won’t answer you, slap him down. That’s the way my grand-daddy did. You go on, Brer Fox, and if he dares to try and run, I’ll just whirl in and catch him for you.”

Well, Brer Fox was sort of doubtful, but he started off towards the wildcat. Old Cousin Wildcat walked all round the tree, rubbing himself, but he didn’t say a word. Brer Rabbit shouted out: “Just walk right up and give him a slap, Brer Fox! The sulky rogue! Just smack him on the nose, and if he runs, I’ll catch him!”

Brer Fox went up a little nearer. Cousin Wildcat stopped rubbing on the tree and sat up on his hind legs with his front paws in the air, balancing himself by leaning against the tree—but he didn't say a word.

Brer Rabbit squalled out: "Oh, you needn't put your hands up and try and beg for mercy! That's the way you tricked my old grand-daddy, but you can't trick me! All your sitting up and begging won't help you! If you're as humble as all that, why don't you answer when we speak to you? Give him a slap, Brer Fox! If he runs, I'll catch him."

Well, Brer Fox looked at the wildcat sitting there looking so humble as if he were begging for mercy, and he grinned at Brer Rabbit. He sidled up towards the creature, and put up his paw to slap him—but just as he raised his paw old Cousin Wildcat drew back and hit Brer Fox a blow across his nose—with all his claws out!

Brer Rabbit knew quite well this would happen. He heard Brer Fox squalling as if the sky had fallen on top of him! As for Cousin Wildcat, he glared at Brer Fox as if he would tear him in two. Brer Rabbit danced round in glee and yelled : "Slap him again, Brer Fox! Slap him again! I guess you'll win, Brer Fox! If he runs my way I'll give him such a smack he'll roll a mile! Slap him again!"

All the time that Brer Rabbit was shouting this, poor Brer Fox was sitting down holding his nose with both hands and moaning and groaning: "I'm killed, Brer Rabbit! I'm killed! Run and fetch the doctor! I'm quite killed!"

Cousin Wildcat took a look at Brer Fox, turned away and walked slowly off. Then Brer Rabbit went near and pretended to be most astonished that Brer Fox was hurt. He looked at Brer Fox's nose and said : "Well, well, well, Brer Fox, that wicked creature must have hit you with a handful of nails!"

And with that Brer Rabbit set off for home, and when he got out of sight he sat down and shook with laughter—and it was a mighty good thing for him that Cousin Wildcat wasn't anywhere about, for Brer Rabbit was so weak with laughing that Cousin Wildcat could have made mincemeat of him—no doubt about that!

II. Brer Wolf Gets Too Warm

NOW AFTER Brer Fox got hit on the nose by Cousin Wildcat it was a mighty long time before he could ramble round and worry old Brer Rabbit. For one thing, Brer Fox had to wear a bandage on his nose, and this didn't make him very beautiful, so he kept at home. But after a while he went out and told every one how Brer Rabbit had tricked him into fighting the fierce wildcat.

Well, Brer Fox told his story so well that all the other creatures agreed that Brer Rabbit was getting worse and worse. Brer Wolf got up and said the time was come when no one should be friends with Brer Rabbit.

"We won't drink out of the same stream as he does, nor walk in the same road, nor live near him, nor go washing in the same washing-hole!" said Brer Wolf.

"We certainly won't!" shouted all the creatures. "And if we can get hold of that wicked Brer Rabbit, we will. It's time his tricks came to an end."

Well, Brer Rabbit couldn't help noticing all these things, for when he met some one in the big road they turned off into the wood before he came up to them—and if he shouted "How-do!" to any one, they didn't answer. It seemed as if Brer Rabbit hadn't any friends at all.

Brer Rabbit guessed he had better make his house a bit stronger. So he worked on his windows and made them fine and strong and put a new bolt on his door. And then, bless us all, if he didn't take it into his head to build a steeple on the top of his house! Yes, a sure-enough steeple, so high that folks going along the big road stopped and said— "Hey! What kind of town-hall is that?"

Well, folks stopped and asked, but Brer Rabbit hadn't got time to answer. He hammered and he nailed, he knocked and he lammed! Folks went by but he didn't say a word to them. Creatures stood round to watch him, but he didn't look at them. It was work, work, work, from sun-up to sun-down, till that steeple got done.

Then old Brer Rabbit drew a long breath, wiped his forehead, and said: "Well, if any one can come and catch me now, I'd like to see it!"

With that he went and got something to eat, and he got a long piece of plough-line too, and he told his old woman to put a kettle of water on the fire, and to stand close by.

“And mind this, old woman,” he said, “whatever I tell you *not* to do, you do it. Have you got that? What I tell you *not* to do, is just what you *must* do!”

Then old Brer Rabbit took his rocking-chair up into the big steeple, near the window there, and sat down and looked out.

It wasn’t long before every one heard that Brer Rabbit had stopped work, and they came around to see what he meant to do next. But Brer Rabbit, he just sat up there, smoking his cigar, looking out and thinking. Brer Wolf stood up and looked at the steeple, Brer Fox he stood up to look at it too, and so did Brer Bear. All the other creatures did the same. They walked round and nudged one another, and stared and stared. All the time old Brer Rabbit sat up there, smoking his cigar, and looking out and thinking.

By and by old Brer Terrapin came along. Now old Brer Terrapin had been friendly with Brer Rabbit so long that he guessed at once there was soon going to be some fun. He laughed right down under the roof of his house, Brer Terrapin did, and then he called to Brer Rabbit:

“Heyo, Brer Rabbit! What are you doing away up there?”

“I’m just a-resting myself, Brer Terrapin,” said Brer Rabbit. “Do come up and see me.”

“Well, between you and me, Brer Rabbit,” said Brer Terrapin, “I’d find it mighty difficult to climb so high.

Suppose you come down here and see *me!* If you live so high up you might as well grow wings! I’m afraid I can’t stretch up and shake hands with you to-day, Brer Rabbit!”

“Don’t worry, Brer Terrapin!” said Brer Rabbit. “I’ve a mighty good staircase, and I’ll just let it down for you.”

With that Brer Rabbit let down his plough-line. “Just catch hold of that, Brer Terrapin,” he said, “and up you’ll come, *linkum, sinkum, binkum, boo!*”

Old Brer Terrapin knew quite well that Brer Rabbit was friendly towards him, so he wasn’t afraid. But all the same, before he let himself go up on that plough-line he took it into his mouth and pulled on it to make sure it wouldn’t break. Then Brer Rabbit shouted out: “Swing on, Brer Terrapin!” And Brer Terrapin, he took hold and swung on. Brer Rabbit heaved him up, and soon he was sitting up there on the steeple by the side of Brer Rabbit. But my! How funny he looked when Brer Rabbit was hauling him up, with his tail a-wiggling, and his legs all spraddled out, whirling round and round on the rope and looking mighty scared!

The other creatures saw Brer Terrapin go up safe and sound, and they saw food being passed round and lemonade, and they began to feel that they would like to see the inside of Brer Rabbit’s steeple too. Brer Wolf shouted up:

“Heyo there, Brer Rabbit! You’re looking mighty comfy up there! How are you?”

Brer Rabbit looked down to see who it was shouting, and when he saw it was Brer Wolf, he winked one eye to himself.

“I’m just so-so, Brer Wolf, but I can eat my food all right. Won’t you come up and see me, Brer Wolf?”

“It’s a mighty clumsy journey for me to make, Brer Rabbit,” said Brer Wolf, “but I’ll have a try!”

With that Brer Rabbit let down his plough-line, and Brer Wolf caught hold, grinning to himself at the thought of being alone with Brer Rabbit in his steeple. He could make short work of him there!

Brer Rabbit hauled on the rope and Brer Wolf went up. Brer Rabbit hauled and hauled, and when Brer Wolf was almost at the top he heard Brer Rabbit yell out to his old woman:

“Stir round, old woman, and set the table, for here’s old Brer Wolf coming to dinner! But before you set the table fetch the kettle to make the coffee.”

Brer Rabbit hauled and he hauled on the plough-line, and then Brer Wolf heard Brer Rabbit squall out: “Look out there, with that kettle, old woman! Don’t you spill any boiling water on Brer Wolf!

Well, that was about all that Brer Wolf heard, because the next minute down came some boiling water on him, and Brer Wolf gave a loud squeal and let go the rope! He fell down and bounced on the ground like a rubber ball.

Old Brer Rabbit leaned out of his steeple and said he was sorry his old woman had been so careless. “You heard me tell her not to scald you, Brer Wolf!” he shouted.

But no matter how much Brer Rabbit said he was sorry, it didn’t make the hair come back on Brer Wolf’s coat, where the water hit it.

And when the creatures had all gone, Brer Rabbit and Brer Terrapin had a mighty good laughing-spell. Brer Terrapin might have fallen out of the steeple with laughing, but Brer Rabbit caught hold of his tail just in time!

III. Brer Wolf is Still in Trouble

ONE time Brer Rabbit got Brer Wolf out of a mighty bad fix. It happened after Brer Wolf had had some of his hair scalded off him when Brer Rabbit's old woman spilt a kettle over him. Brer Wolf had to go away by himself to let his hair grow again, and he was gone so long that Brer Rabbit wondered what had happened to him.

"Well, I expect I can come down safely out of my steeple now," said Brer Rabbit, "And say how-do-you-do to folks"

So down he came, smartened himself up and then he set out for a walk to see who he could meet. He went to the cross-roads and chose a road to go down. Then off he galloped, enjoying stretching out his legs after being so long up on his steeple!

Well, he went on and on and he didn't meet anybody at all.

Though he thought he heard something and he stopped to listen—and he heard somebody yelling.

"Oh my, oh my! Won't somebody come and help me?"

Brer Rabbit heard this and he listened hard. It wasn't long before he heard the somebody yelling out again. "Oh my, oh my! Please, won't somebody come and help me?"

Brer Rabbit, he put up his big ears and shouted back,"Who are you, anyhow, and what in the name of goodness is the matter?"

"Oh, please, somebody, do run here quickly!"

Brer Rabbit got ready to run, and yelled out, "Where-abouts are you, and how did you get there?"

"Oh, do please come quickly and help a poor miserable creature. I'm down here in the ditch under a big rock!"

Well, Brer Rabbit didn't quite know if it was a trick some-body was playing him, so he crept down into the ditch very quietly and looked in—and whoever do you suppose he saw there?

It was old Brer Wolf, that Brer Rabbit had scalded a week back. He was lying down in the ditch, and bless gracious, on top of him was a great big

rock! It was so big that it looked as if it was squashing him flat—but he had strength enough to yell and shout—and he yelled in such a miserable way that Brer Rabbit felt really sorry for him.

Brer Rabbit held his coat-tails up out of the way and slid down to the bottom of the ditch to see if he could help Brer Wolf.

When Brer Wolf saw him coming he spoke mighty politely to him.

“Oh, Brer Rabbit, kind sir, would you please help me to remove this rock?” he said.

“I expect I can help you all right,” said Brer Rabbit.

“Well, Brer Rabbit, kind sir, just you hurry and do it!” groaned Brer Wolf.

So Brer Rabbit caught hold of the rock and pulled hard, and it wasn’t long before he had it on the move, and pretty soon that rock rolled into the ditch-bottom and Brer Wolf was free!

Well, Brer Wolf stretched himself a bit to find out how many of his legs were broken—and it turned out that he wasn’t hurt very much. Well, when he found this, Brer Wolf grinned and thought he could pounce on Brer Rabbit easily enough, and pay him out for all the tricks he had played on him. And no sooner did he think that than he grabbed Brer Rabbit by the back of the neck and the middle of the back!

Brer Rabbit kicked and squealed, but it wasn’t any use, because the more he kicked the tighter Brer Wolf held him—and he squeezed him so hard that Brer Rabbit was afraid he was going to be choked.

“Well now, Brer Wolf!” said poor Brer Rabbit. “Is this the way you thank folks for saving their life?”

Brer Wolf gave a big grin and said, “I’ll thank you kindly first, Brer Rabbit, and then I’ll have you for dinner!”

“If you talk like that, Brer Wolf,” said Brer Rabbit, “I’ll never do you another good turn as long as I live!”

Brer Wolf grinned some more and said, “That you won’t, Brer Rabbit, that you won’t! You won’t do me another good turn till you make me a good dinner!”

Well, Brer Rabbit thought hard for a moment and then he spoke solemnly to Brer Wolf. “Where I come from Brer Wolf, it’s against the law for folks to kill any one that’s done them a good turn, and I expect it’s the law around here, too.”

“I’m not so mighty sure about that,” said Brer Wolf.

“Well,” said Brer Rabbit, “what about us going to old Brer Terrapin, who’s a mighty clever man, and see what he says about it?”

“I don’t mind doing that,” said Brer Wolf, “so long as I take you there in my mouth, Brer Rabbit!”

With that they set out for old Brer Terrapin’s house, and when they got there Brer Wolf told his side of the story and Brer Rabbit told his. Old Brer Terrapin put on his spectacles, cleared his throat, and said:

“This seems all mixed up to me. I can’t make head nor tail of it. Before I take any sides in the matter you’ll just have to take me to see the place where Brer Wolf was when Brer Rabbit found him.”

Well, they took Brer Terrapin to the ditch and they showed him the place where Brer Wolf had lain under the big rock.

Old Brer Terrapin he walked round, he did, and poked at the place with the end of his stick.

By and by he shook his head and said:

“I do hate to put you folks to such trouble, but I’m afraid I’ll have to see just how Brer Wolf was caught, and just how the rock was on top of him. I

guess you'll both think I'm a troublesome chap, but I'll just have to get this right before I take sides."

Then Brer Wolf lay down where he was when Brer Rabbit found him, and the others rolled the rock on top of him so that Brer Terrapin could see everything just so. They rolled the rock on top of him, and there he was. Brer Terrapin walked all round and round and looked at him. Then he sat down, he did, and frowned as if he were thinking mighty hard and mighty deep.

By and by Brer Wolf began to grumble.

"Ooh, Brer Terrapin, this rock's getting mighty heavy!"

Brer Terrapin went on frowning and thinking. Brer Wolf began to wriggle under the rock and shouted, "Ooh, Brer Terrapin, this rock's squashing the breath out of me!"

Then Brer Terrapin sat up straight on his back legs, and spoke in a solemn voice.

"Brer Rabbit, listen to me. You were in the wrong, not Brer Wolf. You hadn't any business to go worrying around Brer Wolf when he wasn't bothering you. He was minding his own business and you should have been minding yours."

Brer Rabbit looked quite ashamed of himself. Brer Terrapin went on talking.

"When you were going along this road this morning, Brer Rabbit, you must surely have been going somewhere. If you *were* going somewhere, you'd better be going right now. Brer Wolf wasn't going anywhere this morning, and he isn't going anywhere now either! You found him under that rock, and under that rock you must leave him!"

And bless gracious, if those two creatures, Brer Rabbit and Brer Terrapin, didn't rush off and leave old Brer Wolf under that rock. Well, it served him right, didn't it?

IV. Brer Rabbit Lays in his Winter Stores

NOW ONE time the winter set in very early, and the creatures couldn't seem to find enough to eat. Brer Fox got as thin as a broom-handle, and Brer Rabbit was just a bag of bones. '

One day they met in the road and began to talk.

"Bad times, Brer Rabbit, bad times," said Brer Fox.

"You've nothing to grumble at, Brer Fox," said Brer Rabbit. "You've got a horse and cart, and I've got nothing except my old wheelbarrow!"

"What's the use of a horse and cart?" said Brer Fox. "You just tell me that, Brer Rabbit—what's the use of a horse and cart when you've got nothing to carry in it? Why, I used to go to the town and bring back my cart full of food—but now the horse is lazing in the field and the cart is lying idle in the shed."

"That's bad," said Brer Rabbit. "Why don't you sell your horse and cart, Brer Fox, and buy food with the money? I'm surprised that a clever man like you hasn't thought of that before."

Well, Brer Fox thought it over and he reckoned it was a mighty good idea. Having a horse and cart wouldn't help him if he was dying of hunger!

"Well," said Brer Fox, "that's a good idea, Brer Rabbit—but if I go to town and sell my horse and cart to buy food, I'll have no cart to bring it home in and no horse to pull it! So I'd be no better off than before!"

"Well, Brer Fox," said Brer Rabbit, "I don't mind giving you a hand over this. I'll lend you my wheelbarrow to bring your shopping home in. We can put the wheelbarrow in the cart when we set out, and after you've sold your horse and cart, you can buy food with the money and put it into my barrow. I'll take turn and turn about in wheeling it home!"

"That's mighty good of you, Brer Rabbit," said Brer Fox.

"I'll do that. Meet me at the corner of the road to-morrow morning and we'll set off for town."

So the next morning the two of them set off in the cart. Brer Fox clucked to his horse and they galloped into the town Pretty soon Brer Fox had sold the horse and cart and had money to jingle in his pockets.

My, the food he bought! It just made old Brer Rabbit’s mouth water, so it did! A sack of rice, a sack of corn, a sack of coffee, a sack of turnips—it

was a wonder it all went into the barrow!

“You take a turn at wheeling the barrow first, Brer Rabbit,” said Brer Fox. “My arms ache from driving the horse.”

Brer Rabbit lifted the handles of the barrow. My, but it was heavy! Brer Rabbit puffed and panted and Brer Fox grinned to see him. Brer Fox walked fast and Brer Rabbit couldn’t keep up with him. He did his best, but, but Brer Fox always seemed to manage to keep so far ahead that Brer Rabbit couldn’t shout loudly enough to him to make him hear.

Well, at last Brer Rabbit’s arms were aching so much at he had to put the barrow down.

“Heyo Brer Fox!” he yelled. “You come along back here! It’s your turn now!”

Brer Fox went skipping along in front and didn’t so much as turn his head.”

“Brer Fox! BRER FOX! You come along back here” yelled Brer Rabbit. “I’m not going to wheel your food all the way home. You give me my share for helping you, and I’ll take it and go.”

Brer Fox heard that all right. He turned round an grinned at Brer Rabbit.

“The food’s mine!” he shouted. “I may give you a handful of rice, Brer Rabbit, but that; all you’ll get! Aha! Some one else can play tricks, as well as you!”

Brer Rabbit thought mighty hard, he did. Then he shouted to Brer Fox.

“All right, Brer Fox. Just give me my handful of rice and I’ll be off. But you might pop into Brer Bear’s house just over there and ask him for a little bag to put my rice in. I can’t carry it in my paws very well.”

So Brer Fox, grinning to himself and feeling mighty pleased with things, hopped along to Brer Bear’s house and borrowed the smallest bag he could.

Now as soon as Brer Fox was out of sight, Brer Rabbit took hold of the sack of rice and pulled it out of the barrow. He hid it under a bush, but before he left it there he put his hand in at the top and got a handful of rice grains out. He ran back to the barrow and then set off in the opposite direction, dropping the rice as he went. Then back he went to the barrow again and sat down by it, pretending to cry.

By and by Brer Fox came back with a small bag, and when he got there he saw Brer Rabbit crying. My, but he was boo-hooing!

“In the name of goodness, Brer Rabbit, what’s the matter?” said Brer Fox.

“Matter enough, matter enough!” said Brer Rabbit. “I wish you’d stayed here instead of going off, Brer Fox.”

“What’s up then, Brer Rabbit?”

“Oh, a man came, Brer Fox, and stole your lovely bag of rice!” sobbed Brer Rabbit. “I ran after him but he went too fast for me.”

“Which way did he go, Brer Rabbit?”

“There’s the way he went, Brer Fox, there’s where he dropped the rice out of the sack as he ran. If you’re quick, Brer Fox, you’ll catch him!”

Brer Fox dropped the bag he carried and tore off, hoping to catch the man that Brer Rabbit spoke of. He was hardly out of sight when Brer Rabbit caught hold of the bag of coffee and carried that away to the bush and hid it too. He put his hand into the top of the sack, took out some coffee beans, ran back to the barrow, and then set off in the other direction, dropping the beans as he went. It looked just as if some one had run there with a sack, dropping beans out of it as he ran!

After a while, back came Brer Fox, a-puffing and a-panting. He hadn’t seen any man at all. Brer Rabbit shouted to him.

“You haven’t come a minute too soon, Brer Fox! While you were gone another man came and carried off the coffee. See that’s the way he went, Brer Fox, and if you’re quick, you’ll catch him!”

Well, Brer Fox set off again as fast as he could, and he ran and ran, but he didn’t see any man at all. Whilst he was gone Brer Rabbit carried off the sack of corn, and sprinkled some grains in the opposite direction again. Then Brer Fox came back, shouting that he hadn’t seen any one—and Brer Rabbit yelled to him to say that another man had been and had carried off the corn.

Well this suddenly seemed mighty queer to Brer Fox—all these men coming by that way, in a lonely place, and stealing out of his barrow. He wondered if maybe Brer Rabbit was up to one of his tricks, so when he ran

off, pretending to chase the man again, he didn't go very far, but turned round and crept back to see what Brer Rabbit was doing.

And he was just in time to see Brer Rabbit pulling at the sack of turnips in his barrow! Well, Brer Fox was mighty tired with running hither and thither and backwards and forwards, but he felt so mad when he saw what Brer Rabbit was up to that he dashed up to him and shouted at him.

"What are you going to do with that sack of turnips?" he yelled.

Brer Rabbit put the sack down and looked very upset. He looked at Brer Fox as if he felt mighty sorry for folks who asked such foolish questions. He shook his head, he did, and said:

"Well, well, well! Who'd have thought Brer Fox would have come yelling at me like this, when any one would guess I was just a-carrying it off to save for him, so's no man could steal it?"

But this sort of talk didn't deceive Brer Fox, and he snarled so fiercely that Brer Rabbit thought it would be better to run—and run he did, with Brer Fox at his tail, between the trees. And at last Brer Rabbit came to a hollow tree and in he went!

Well, old Brer Buzzard was a-sailing round in the air, and Brer Fox called to him.

"Just you watch this hole for me, Brer Buzzard," said Brer Fox. "I'm a-going to fetch some fire to smoke old Brer Rabbit out!"

Well, Brer Fox set off, and Brer Buzzard settled down beside the hole—and after a bit Brer Rabbit sang out, "I've got the better of you, Brer Buzzard! I surely have!"

"How's that, Brer Rabbit?" said Brer Buzzard.

"Because I can see you and you can't see me!" said Brer Rabbit, in his most cheeky voice.

With that Brer Buzzard stuck his head in the hole of the tree and looked up to see Brer Rabbit, and no sooner did he do this than Brer Rabbit flung a handful of sand down into his eyes.

Poor Brer Buzzard! He blinked and he winked but he couldn't get the sand out—so down to the stream he flew to wash his eyes. And whilst he was gone Brer Rabbit came down out of the hollow tree, and raced back to the barrow.

It wasn’t long before he had taken the sacks of corn, rice, and coffee out from under the bush where he had hidden them, popped them into the barrow with the sack of turnips, and trundled away merrily to his home.

And my, didn’t Brer Fox shake his fist when he passed by Brer Rabbit’s house the next day and smelt fried rice-cakes and fresh coffee! Ah, it’s no use trying to trick Brer Rabbit!

V. Brer Rabbit and Cousin Wildcat

NOW COUSIN WILDCAT had not forgotten how Brer Rabbit had tried to set Brer Fox on him, and he lay in wait for him. And as Brer Rabbit was going along down the road, lickety-clickety, clickety-lickety, he suddenly felt something drop down on him! When Brer Rabbit pulled himself together he found that it was Mr. Wildcat hugging him from behind and whispering in his ear!

Old Mr. Wildcat had been lying stretched out on a tree branch that overhung the road, and when he had heard Brer Rabbit lickety-clicketing down the road he grinned to himself, and got ready to drop right down on him. And there he was, hugging and squeezing Brer Rabbit for all he was worth.

Brer Rabbit kicked and squalled. By and by he got his breath and said, “Oh! Oh, my goodness gracious me! What’s happened now?”

Cousin Wildcat, he rubbed his wet nose on Brer Rabbit’s ear, and made a cold chill run up his back. By and by he said, “Oh, Brer Rabbit, don’t I just love you! You’ve been tricking all my cousins and my family, and it isn’t so mighty long since you set Brer Fox on me so that I nearly tore him in two! Oh, Brer Rabbit, don’t I just love you!”

Then Cousin Wildcat laughed and struck his teeth together close to Brer Rabbit’s ear. Brer Rabbit spoke up.

“Goodness, Cousin Wildcat, the only reason I sent Brer Fox up to you that day was because I thought maybe you’d like to have him for your supper. Dear me, Cousin Wildcat, if you’re going to be upset with me because of a thing like that, I’m not going to be friends with you any more!”

Mr. Wildcat wiped his nose on Brer Rabbit’s ear, and looked as if he were thinking hard. Brer Rabbit went on talking.

“Now just you tell me, Mr. Wildcat—have I ever bothered you? Just you tell me that!”

“No, Brer Rabbit, I can’t say that you have bothered me,” said Cousin Wildcat.

“No, you can’t,” said Brer Rabbit. “And more than that, Cousin Wildcat, I’ve done my level best to help you, And though you’ve jumped down on me like this and scared me dreadfully, I’m willing to do you another good turn to show you what a good friend I can be to you. I can hear some wild turkeys yelping out yonder, and if you’ll let me off this time, I’ll go out and call them up, and you can lie down as if you were dead, and they’ll all come round you and stretch their necks out over you to see you, and you can jump up and get the whole lot of them before they can get out of the way!”

Mr. Wildcat listened and thought hard. If there was one kind of meat he liked better than another, it was turkey meat!

“Are you joking, Brer Rabbit?” he asked.

“Well, if I was off home walking by myself I might be joking,” said Brer Rabbit, “but how in the name of goodness can I joke when you’re on top of me hugging me so tightly, Cousin Wildcat?”

“Well, if you mean what you say, you can get up and call those turkeys here,” said Cousin Wildcat, and he got off Brer Rabbit’s back.

Wasn’t Brer Rabbit pleased to get rid of him? He went into the bushes and began to yelp like a wild turkey, and he knew mighty well how to do that. Cousin Wildcat lay down on the ground for all the world as if he were dead.

Well, it didn’t take Brer Rabbit long to get some turkeys along, for he was a good yelper, and all the turkeys came up to see who it was yelping. There they all came, with Brer Gibley Gobbler leading them. Brer Rabbit ran to meet them, and he winked at them, and whispered about old Mr. Wildcat, and how he was only pretending to be dead.

Well, by the time the turkeys got up to Mr. Wildcat, there was a great chattering and disputing going on among them. One turkey said Mr. Wildcat was dead. Another said he wasn’t. Another said it looked as if he was. Another said it looked as if he wasn’t. They stretched out their necks and lifted their feet high as if they were going to lean over Mr. Wildcat, but not one of them got too close to him!

Cousin Wildcat lay there and he didn’t move. The wind ruffled up his fur, but he didn’t move; the sun shone down hotly on him, but he didn’t move. The turkeys gobbled and yelped round him, but they didn’t go any nearer. They shouted and quarrelled about Mr. Wildcat, they stretched out

their necks and lifted up their feet—but not a turkey went really near to Mr. Wildcat.

Well, they went on like this, enjoying the joke, till by and by Mr. Wildcat got tired of waiting and he jumped up, he did, and made a dash at the nearest turkey. But the turkey was ready, and when Mr. Wildcat ran at him he just rose up into the air, and Mr. Wildcat ran under him!

Then Mr. Wildcat ran at the next turkey, and that one flew up too. And it went on like this till poor Mr. Wildcat was so stiff in the joints and so out of breath that he just had to lie down on the ground and rest. And whilst he did this, Brer Gibley Gobbler and all his family flew on their way, laughing and yelping loudly.

When he got back his breath Cousin Wildcat looked round for Brer Rabbit. But he was nowhere to be seen. Cousin Wildcat shouted for him.

“Brer Rabbit! Hey, Brer Rabbit! Come along here. I want to talk to you.”

But Brer Rabbit didn’t come. So Cousin Wildcat got up and hunted round for him and he wasn’t anywhere to be seen. Whilst all the gobbling and yelping had been going on Brer Rabbit had bowed his good-byes to every one and then run off as if a hundred dogs were after him! He wasn’t staying till the end!

And the next day old Brer Gibley Gobbler sent him a fine turkey wing to make a fan out of, and Brer Rabbit sent it to Miss Meadows and the girls. My, what a fuss they made of Brer Rabbit for sending them such a beautiful present! He just sat there like a king and grinned away at everybody!

VI. Mr. Benjamin Ram

OLD MR. BENJAMIN RAM was a queer-looking creature, he surely was. His wrinkly horn and the shaggy hair on his neck made him look mighty fierce, and when he shook his head and snorted it looked as if he were going to paw up all the ground beneath his feet!

Old Brer Fox had been catching and eating Mr. Benjamin Ram's children, the little lambs, but he had never got too close to Mr. Ram himself.

One time when he was going down the road, talking to Brer Wolf, Brer Fox let out a big sigh and said he was mighty hungry in his middle.

"Why in the name of goodness are you hungry, Brer Fox, when old Mr. Benjamin Ram is up in his house there just rolling in fat?" said Brer Wolf, in an astonished voice.

"Huh!" said Brer Fox, "I know I'm in the habit of eating Mr. Ram's children, but I'm sort of scared of the old creature because of his red eye and wrinkly horn."

Brer Wolf shouted with laughter, and said, "Good gracious, Brer Fox! I don't know what sort of a fellow you are—why, that old Mr. Ram never hurt a fly in all his life, that he hasn't!"

Brer Fox looked very hard at Brer Wolf. Then he said, "Heyo, Brer Wolf! Many's the time I've seen you hungry, but yet I never heard you talk of making a meal off Mr. Benjamin Ram!"

Brer Wolf didn't quite know what to say to this. After a bit he said, "I should just like to know who in the name of goodness would want to eat a tough old creature like Mr. Benjamin Ram! I'd just like to know that, Brer Fox!"

Brer Fox laughed, he did, and then he said to Brer Wolf, "Ah, yi, Brer Wolf! You ask me what I go hungry for when I could go and eat old Mr. Benjamin Ram—but why didn't *you* eat him when *you* were hungry? That's what *I* want to know!"

Brer Wolf got angry and hit the ground with the end of his stick. “I’ve said all I’ve got to say,” he said. “That old creature is too tough for me to eat.”

Although he was very hungry, Brer Fox went on laughing. “Well, Brer Wolf,” he said, “I’m not going to talk about it any longer—I’m going to do what you say. I’m going to go up to Mr. Ram’s house and have him for supper—and I wish you’d be so good as to go along and keep me company.”

Well, Brer Wolf didn’t like the sound of this at all. “I’d rather go by myself,” he said.

“Well, you’d better hurry then,” said Brer Fox, “because it isn’t going to take me long to get to Mr. Ram’s house!”

Brer Wolf was in a fix. He knew quite well that if he backed out of this, Brer Fox would tell Miss Meadows and the girls, and they would laugh at him and tease him. So he marched off towards Mr. Benjamin Ram’s house.

As he went, a little puff of wind blew up some leaves, and they scared Brer Wolf so much that he jumped as if he had been shot. Brer Fox laughed at him, and this made Brer Wolf so angry that he hurried on in front to Mr. Ram’s house.

He knocked at the door, he did, and, of course, he expected somebody to come and open it—but instead of that, round the corner of the house came old Mr. Benjamin Ram. There he was—red eye, wrinkly horn, and shaggy head. My, what a shock he gave Brer Wolf! Brer Wolf shot down the path, and out of the gate back to Brer Fox as if he’d been fired out of a gun!

Brer Fox laughed and laughed. Brer Wolf looked mighty down in the dumps. “Have you killed and eaten Mr. Benjamin Ram?” asked Brer Fox. “And have you left any for me?”

“Be quiet,” said Brer Wolf. “I’m not feeling very well.”

“Well, your legs feel well enough!” said Brer Fox. “My, how they ran just now!”

“I only ran to see if I could make myself feel better,” said Brer Wolf sulkily.

“Dear, dear!” said Brer Fox. “When I’m feeling poorly, Brer Wolf, I just want to lie down!”

Well, they went on this way, they did, till by and by Brer Fox asked Brer Wolf if he would go with him to catch Mr. Benjamin Ram.

“No, Brer Fox,” said Brer Wolf. “I’m afraid you’ll run off and leave me to do the fighting.”

“Indeed I won’t,” said Brer Fox. “And I’ll soon show you how to feel safe. I’ll get a rope and tie one end to you and one end to me. Then we can neither of us run away! We’ll both have to fight!”

Well, Brer Wolf had to be content with that, and they set out to Mr. Benjamin Ram’s house. Brer Wolf sort of hung back, but he was ashamed to say he was afraid, and on they went until they got right up to Mr. Ram’s house.

When they got there the old creature was sitting out in the front porch sunning himself. He saw them coming and cleared his throat and shouted:

“Ha, Brer Fox! I see you’ve got Brer Wolf tied up properly, and you’re a-leading him here to me! I’m obliged to you for catching him for me. My larder is getting empty, and I’d like to chop him up and pickle him. Fetch him in, Brer Fox, fetch him in!”

Just about then Mrs. Ram looked out of the window and saw the two coming, and she was so scared that she began to bleat at the top of her voice! My! You should have heard her! Her voice even reached the town, it was so loud. It even scared Mr. Benjamin Ram himself, but he kept on talking.

“Fetch him in, Brer Fox! Fetch him in! Don’t you hear my old woman bleating for him? She hasn’t tasted wolf-meat for years. My, won’t she be pleased to have some on her table. Fetch him in, Brer Fox, fetch him in!”

Well, when Brer Wolf heard all this he got more scared than ever. First he tried to untie the rope round him, and when he couldn’t do it, he turned back and ran for his life, jerking poor Brer Fox off his feet, and dragging him behind him at the other end of the rope as if he were a parcel of bones!

Bumpity - thumpity - bump! Thumpity - bumpity - thump! Brer Fox bumped and thumped over the ground till the rope broke—and then he sat up and saw Brer Wolf disappearing in the wood like a streak of lightning.

And that was the last time Brer Fox tried any tricks with Mr. Benjamin Ram. My, what a crowd of fine bruises and bumps he had that day!

VII. Brer Rabbit’s Meat

NOW IT got about that Brer Rabbit had gone off with Brer Fox’s sacks of food, and all the other creatures kept a sharp eye on him, hoping to get some of the food out of him. But, bless gracious, Brer Rabbit was too smart for them, and not a coffee bean did any one get—no, not so much as the smell of it!

One morning one of Brer Rabbit’s children came running in to tell him that he had found a big piece of meat lying in the woods. Brer Rabbit pricked up his big ears, tied his scarf round his neck and set off to find it. Sure enough there was a fine piece of meat there, and Brer Rabbit did a dance of joy.

But just as he was about to-carve it up to take home, old Brer Wolf happened along.

“Heyo, Brer Rabbit!” he said, as he smelt the meat. “So this is where you keep your stores! My, that’s a fine piece of meat! If you ask me to have a bite, I won’t say no—and if you don’t ask me, well, I’ll have some all the same!”

And with that he set to work, carving and cutting at the meat, glad to pay Brer Rabbit out for all the tricks he had played on him.

“We’ll share this meat between us, Brer Rabbit,” he said. “But as I’m the biggest, it’s fair I should have more than you, isn’t it?”

Well, by the way Brer Wolf set to work at that meat, it looked as if he would eat it all! Brer Rabbit put on a don’t care look, but he was so upset that he really felt bad! He walked all round the meat, he did, and sniffed the air—and soon he said:

“Brer Wolf! Brer Wolf! Does this meat smell really good to you?”

Brer Wolf went on cutting and carving, and didn’t say a word. Then Brer Rabbit walked all round the meat once more. He poked it with his paw. He kicked it.

“Brer Wolf! Oh, Brer Wolf!” he said, “this meat feels mighty flabby to me. How does it feel to you?”

Brer Wolf heard every word that was said, but he kept on cutting and carving.

“Well,” said Brer Rabbit, “you can talk or not talk, Brer Wolf, just as you please—but if I’m not mistaken in the smell, you’ll be very sorry for yourself before you’ve finished this beef! You just wait and see, Brer Wolf!”

With that Brer Rabbit set off to his home and pretty soon came back with a dish of salt and a piece of burning wood.

Brer Wolf looked up in surprise. “What are you going to do with all that, Brer Rabbit?”

Brer Rabbit laughed as if he knew a lot more than he would tell. “Bless gracious, Brer Wolf! I’m not going to take even a pound of this meat home till I find out what’s wrong with it. No, I’m not—so there now!”

Then Brer Rabbit built a fire of twigs and branches, lighted it with his piece of burning wood, and cut himself a slice of the meat. He held it over the fire till it was well broiled, and then he ate a little of it.

First he’d taste and then he’d nibble; then he’d nibble and then he’d taste. He kept on till he had eaten a good piece of the meat. Then he went and sat a little way off as if he were waiting for something.

Brer Wolf went on carving and cutting, but he kept one eye on Brer Rabbit. Brer Rabbit sat up straight as a judge. Brer Wolf watched him carefully. Soon Brer Rabbit flung both of his hands up to his head and gave a deep groan. Brer Wolf cut and carved, and watched Brer Rabbit. Then Brer Rabbit began to sway backwards and forwards, and groaned and moaned all the time. Then he swayed from side to side.

“Oh my, oh my, oh my!” he groaned. “Oh my!”

Well, Brer Wolf began to feel a bit scared at all this. “What’s the matter?” he said.

Then Brer Rabbit rolled over and over on the ground and yelled : “Oh my, oh my! I’m poisoned, I’m poisoned! Oh my! I’m poisoned! Run and fetch the doctor, somebody! Run and fetch the doctor! Help! Help! The meat’s got poison on it! Oh, help! help!”

Well, Brer Wolf was so scared that he set off at once to fetch the doctor, and he was no sooner out of sight than up jumped Brer Rabbit, grinning from whisker to whisker, and began to cut up that meat as fast as ever he could!

He ran to and from his smoke-house with big pieces, and it wasn’t very long before Brer Rabbit had got every bit safely put away, and the smoke-house door shut and bolted!

Well, Brer Wolf found the doctor and told him all about poor Brer Rabbit, and how he had been poisoned—and Brer Wolf was pretty scared himself too, thinking he might be poisoned as well! Brer Wolf hurried back with the doctor, and when he got there Brer Rabbit and the meat had gone. And, bless goodness, if it hadn’t been for Brer Rabbit’s fire which was still burning, Brer Wolf would have found it very difficult to find where the meat had been at all!

And whenever Brer Wolf passed Brer Rabbit’s house that week he could smell fried meat and onions a-cooking. But old Brer Wolf didn’t get more than the smell of it, for Brer Rabbit was mighty careful to keep his door locked for a month of Sundays afterwards!

VIII. Brer Wolf gets into More Trouble

NOW BRER RABBIT was mighty careful to keep away from Brer Wolf after he had pretended the meat was poisoned, but one day he met him right in the very middle of the big road. Brer Rabbit rushed off to the side, but Brer Wolf shouted to him.

“Whoa there, Brer Rabbit! Don’t be in such a hurry! Aren’t you ashamed of yourself for the way you tricked me about that meat?”

“Bless gracious, so it’s you, Brer Wolf, is it?” said Brer Rabbit, pretending that he hadn’t known it was Brer Wolf. “How’s yourself and all your folks?”

“You’ll find out how they all are before the day’s ended!” said Brer Wolf, with a nasty sort of grin. “You took that meat, Brer Rabbit—and now I’m a-going to take *you*!”

With that Brer Wolf made a dash at Brer Rabbit, but he just wasn’t quite quick enough, and Brer Rabbit went galloping through the woods, lippitty-clippitty, clippitty-lippitty! Brer Wolf shot after him, and there they went—first Brer Rabbit a-scampering and then Brer Wolf a-scooting! Brer Rabbit was faster than Brer Wolf, but Brer Wolf could run for longer, and soon he was so near Brer Rabbit that Brer Rabbit had to run into a hollow log that lay on the ground.

Now Brer Rabbit had been in that log before, and he knew quite well there was a hole at the other end for him to get out of, so he just shot through the log at top speed. He galloped in at one end and out at the other. He didn’t stop to say good-bye—no, he just kept on going!

Well, when Brer Wolf saw Brer Rabbit run into that hollow log, he was mighty pleased. Brer Wolf didn’t know there was a hole at the other end. “Heyo!” said Brer Wolf to himself, “we’ve been thinking you’re mighty cunning all this time, Brer Rabbit, and here you’ve gone and put yourself into a fine trap! I’ve got you this time!”

Then Brer Wolf laughed, and laid himself down by the end where Brer Rabbit went in, and he panted and got back his breath. Not far off he saw Brer Bear burning up some rubbish, and he shouted to him and asked him to bring a chunk of fire. Brer Bear brought along a burning branch, and they set fire to the hollow log, and sat by it and watched it till it was all burnt up. Then they shook hands solemnly.

“Huh!” said Brer Wolf, “that’s the end of Brer Rabbit.”

“And now maybe we’ll have some peace in this neighbourhood!” said Brer Bear.

Now not long after that Brer Wolf thought he would call and tell Miss Meadows about Brer Rabbit. So off he set, all got up in his best things. And when he got there, who should he see sitting up there by one of the girls but old Brer Rabbit himself! Well, Brer Wolf was certain he had burnt Brer Rabbit in that hollow log, and he stared at him as if he couldn’t make him

out at all. He was so scared and surprised that he nearly turned tail and ran for home. But his legs just wouldn’t take him and he had to sit down and say “how-do-you-do” as politely as he could.

Brer Rabbit bowed to Brer Wolf and shook hands with him just as if nothing had even happened between them.

“Ah-yi, Brer Wolf!” said Brer Rabbit. “You did me a good turn the other day, and I’m so grateful to you that if ever you want a friend, you can count on me!”

“How’s that, Brer Rabbit?” said Brer Wolf, astonished. “You’ve changed your mind pretty quickly.”

“And a good thing too,” said Brer Rabbit, grinning so kindly at Brer Wolf that he felt really puzzled.

“Why did you change your mind?” said Brer Wolf.

“Why, I’m so pleased that you tried to burn me up in that hollow log, Brer Wolf,” said Brer Rabbit. “And when you get time, I wish you’d burn me up some more!”

“How so, Brer Rabbit?” said Brer Wolf, more and more astonished.

“I don’t like to tell you, Brer Wolf, in case the news gets round,” said Brer Rabbit.

“I won’t tell a soul,” said Brer Wolf. “You tell me the secret, Brer Rabbit, and I won’t tell even my old woman.”

Then Brer Rabbit got close to Brer Wolf and spoke into his ear as if he didn’t want any one else to hear what he was saying.

“I found out something, Brer Wolf, when you were a-burning me in that hollow log. Do you know that when you get into a hollow tree and some one sets it a-fire, the natural honey just oozles out of it, and after you’ve sucked in what you want, the honey runs all over you and then it’s no use for the fire to try and burn you, because it can’t get through the coat of honey? I do hope you’ll try and burn me up again, Brer Wolf, because I know where there is a good hollow tree.”

Well, Brer Wolf was mighty astonished to hear this. He looked at Brer Rabbit and Brer Rabbit looked back at him as if there was a fine secret between them. Brer Wolf felt sure that what Brer Rabbit was saying must be true, because hadn’t he, Brer Wolf, set fire to that hollow log himself?

“I’d like to set out right now and find that hollow tree,” said Brer Wolf.

“Good!” said Brer Rabbit. “That’s just what I hoped.”

So off they went, and it wasn’t long before they came to the hollow log that Brer Rabbit said he had picked out. Well, when they got there, Brer Wolf didn’t see why Brer Rabbit should sit in the hollow log and eat up the honey. He was greedy for a taste of the honey himself.

“You let *me* get into the hollow tree, Brer Rabbit,” he begged. “You’ve had your turn.”

“No, I want another turn,” said Brer Rabbit.

“You give me a turn first, and you shall have another turn afterwards,” said Brer Wolf.

“All right,” said Brer Rabbit. “I’m not the man to say no to my friends when they ask me a favour. You get into the tree, Brer Wolf.”

So Brer Wolf squeezed himself in, he did, and Brer Rabbit stuffed up the hole with dry leaves and rubbish, and he grinned to himself, because he knew there wasn’t any hole at the other end this time! Then Brer Rabbit got a chunk of fire and set light to the log. It smoked and it smoked, and then burst out into a blaze.

Brer Rabbit piled up bracken and branches and sticks and stones so that Brer Wolf couldn’t get out. Soon Brer Wolf began to yell.

“It’s getting mighty hot, Brer Rabbit, and I haven’t seen any honey yet!”

Brer Rabbit piled on more leaves and shouted back : “Don’t be in such a hurry, Brer Wolf! You’ll see the honey in a minute, and taste it too!”

The fire burnt up, and the wood popped like pistol-shots. Brer Wolf began to scramble round a bit, and yelled out: “It’s getting hotter and hotter, Brer Rabbit. No honey has come yet!”

“Keep still, Brer Wolf—it’ll come!”

“Give me some air, Brer Rabbit. I’m a-cooking!”

“Fresh air will turn the honey sour, Brer Wolf. Just keep still!”

“Ow! It’s getting hotter and hotter, Brer Rabbit!”

“Just keep still, Brer Wolf! It’s nearly time for the honey.”

“Ow! Ow! I’m a-cooking, Brer Rabbit!”

“Wait for the honey, Brer Wolf!”

“I can’t stand it, Brer Rabbit!”

“Well, you made *me* stand it, Brer Wolf—so just you stand it too! I’ll give you honey, Brer Wolf—yes, the same kind as you gave me!”

But poor Brer Wolf couldn’t stop in the log looking for honey any longer. He burst right out of it, he did, with sparks a-flying from his fur. And he was so hot that Brer Rabbit felt scorched and took to his heels as if Cousin Wildcat was after him and all his family too! And after that Brer Wolf kept right away from Brer Rabbit.

He’d been scalded—and squashed under a rock—and nearly cooked—and Brer Wolf reckoned Brer Rabbit was just a bit too clever for him!

IX. Brer Rabbit Tricks Mr. Man

ONE DAY Brer Rabbit was going along the big road when he met Mr. Man driving along with a wagon full of greens. Mr. Man was taking them to market, and he meant to get a good price for them too! Well, Brer Rabbit saw those greens, and he made up his mind that Mr. Man had too many, and he, Brer Rabbit, hadn't enough.

"There's something wrong somewhere," said Brer Rabbit. "If there wasn't, I'd have a wagon full of greens too! Now, why haven't I got one?"

When Mr. Man drove up, Brer Rabbit shouted to him:

"Mr. Man, please, sir, give me a lift!"

Mr. Man stopped his horse and said : "Heyo, Brer Rabbit! How's this? You are going one way and I'm going the other. What good is a lift going to do you when I'm going the wrong way?"

Brer Rabbit scratched the back of his neck with his hind foot and shouted out: "Mr. Man, you can't know me very well if you don't know I'll take a lift no matter which way I'm going!"

Well, after some time Mr. Man said Brer Rabbit could get up and have a lift.

"You come and sit here with me," said Mr. Man. "I'd like to talk to you to pass away the time."

"Oh no, Mr. Man," said Brer Rabbit. "I'd be scared of falling off if I sat in front with you. I'd rather sit right flat down in the bottom of the wagon."

So he climbed into the back of the wagon and crouched down there at the bottom as if he were afraid to move.

By and by, whilst they were going down a steep hill and Mr. Man had to keep an eye on his horse, Brer Rabbit took hold of two big cabbages and flung them out on to the road. Just as they hit the ground with a thud, Brer Rabbit shouted out “OW!” at the top of his voice, to hide the noise.

Mr. Man looked round in surprise. “What’s the matter?” he said.

“Oh, nothing at all, Mr. Man,” said Brer Rabbit, “except that the wagon went over a stone and gave such a jolt that I nearly fell out.”

Well, they went on a little farther, and Brer Rabbit took hold of two more cabbages. When Mr. Man had his eye on the horses Brer Rabbit threw the cabbages out—thud—on the road. Just as they hit the ground Brer Rabbit shouted out, “BLAM!” at the top of his voice.

This drowned the noise of the cabbages falling and made Mr. Man jump. “Whatever’s the matter now?” he said.

“Nothing at all, Mr. Man,” said Brer Rabbit, “except that I saw a big bird flying along and I pretended I had a gun and shot at him, blam!”

Mr. Man turned back to his horse again. Brer Rabbit waited until they came to a mighty slippery place and Mr. Man had to guide his horse carefully. Then he took up four cabbages and threw them out—thud! But just as they struck the ground Brer Rabbit gave such a loud yell that Mr. Man almost fell off his seat. “BLAM-BLAM!”

“Bless gracious, Brer Rabbit, whatever are you doing now?” yelled Mr. Man. “I nearly drove into a tree, you startled me so!”

“Sorry, Mr. Man,” said Brer Rabbit. “I saw Cousin Wildcat making a face at me through the trees, and I just pretended I had a great big gun and shot at him, blam-blam!”

Well, Brer Rabbit kept on like this, making loud noises whenever he threw out the cabbages, till at last the wagon was quite empty. Mr. Man didn’t notice this until he had got a good way to market, and then he looked round to say something to old Brer Rabbit—and saw that his wagon was empty!

Mr. Man stopped his horse and stared at the empty wagon in the greatest astonishment. “Where’s my greens?” he yelled. “Where are my nice cabbages? Oh, you long-eared rascal! Where are my lovely cabbages? You give me those cabbages, Brer Rabbit, or you’ll be sorry for yourself.”

Brer Rabbit sat at the back of the wagon and listened as if he were mighty astonished. “Now, now, Mr. Man,” he said, “just keep quiet. If folks come along this way they’ll think you are acting mighty queer.”

“You give me my cabbages, you long-eared scamp!” roared Mr. Man. “Look at all the way I’ve come to market to sell them—and now I’m nearly

there and they've all gone!"

"Well, Mr. Man, I haven't got your cabbages," said Brer Rabbit. "That I haven't. Could I hide a hundred cabbages in my coat, do you think? No, that I couldn't. And I couldn't eat them all, either. No, Mr. Man, your cabbages have just disappeared, and it's no use asking me where they've gone, for I don't know where their friends are."

"You give me my cabbages," shouted Mr. Man, and he threw the reins on the horse's back and stood up to get hold of Brer Rabbit.

Well, Brer Rabbit began to get a bit scared and guessed it was time to go. So he dropped off the back of the wagon as nimbly as you please.

"The sun's getting low, Mr. Man, and I'd better be going. The sooner I go the better, because if you go on like this you'll soon be accusing me of taking all those cabbages, and you can see I haven't got a single one of them. Thank you for the lift, Mr. Man, and I wish you mighty well."

He trotted off down the road, carrying an old sack over his shoulder that he had found at the bottom of the wagon. And it wasn't long before that sack was full of cabbages—yes, as full as could be! Brer Rabbit picked up every one of them—and the only thing that surprises me is that he didn't get the horse and wagon as well! Oh, he's a sly fellow and a wicked one is Brer Rabbit!

X. Mr. Lion and Brer Rabbit Go Hunting

NOW THE more Mr. Lion thought about how Brer Rabbit tricked every one, the cleverer he thought Brer Rabbit was. And it came into his head that if he could make a friend of old Brer Rabbit maybe he'd get on a lot better. So he set off and found Brer Rabbit's house.

"Brer Rabbit, will you come hunting with me?" shouted Mr. Lion, banging at the door.

"No, Mr. Lion. I'm afraid you'd do all the hunting and I'd do all the running!" shouted back Brer Rabbit.

"Brer Rabbit, you're mighty clever, and I couldn't catch you if I tried," said Mr. Lion. "I give you my word I want to be your friend. Come on, now, and go hunting with me."

Well, when Brer Rabbit heard Mr. Lion say he'd give him his word, he knew Mr. Lion was speaking the truth, for no one had ever known old Mr. Lion to break a promise. So Brer Rabbit hopped out of his house and joined Mr. Lion. They each had a gun, and off they went across the countryside to hunt for food.

When they saw plovers in the air Mr. Lion raised his gun and shot, bang-bang! But he always missed. Brer Rabbit, he raised his gun and shot, and he always hit what he was shooting at. But no sooner did the bird he shot fall down than Mr. Lion would cry:

"It's mine! It's mine! I killed it!"

Well, Mr. Lion was such a big fellow that Brer Rabbit was afraid of quarrelling with him, but he made up his mind to get even with him. They went on and they went on. Mr. Lion kept missing his shots and Brer Rabbit kept hitting everything, and Mr. Lion, he always said the kill was his.

They hunted all day long, and when night came they were such a long way from home that they had to camp out. So they found a stream, and when they came to it they cleared a space, built a fire on the bank, and cooked their supper.

After supper they sat up and told tales, and Brer Rabbit, he said what a mighty good hunter Mr. Lion was, and Mr. Lion, he leant back on his elbow and felt mighty biggitty. Then, when Brer Rabbit saw Mr. Lion getting sleepy, he said: “I’m a monstrous heavy snorer, Mr. Lion, when I fall asleep, and I hope and trust I shan’t disturb you this night.”

Mr. Lion threw back his mane out of his eyes and said: “I’m a monstrous heavy snorer myself, Brer Rabbit, and I’ll feel mighty glad if I don’t rouse you up in the night too.”

“Well, Mr. Lion,” said Brer Rabbit, “I wish you’d‘be so good as to show me how you snore just *before* you get to sleep.”

Mr. Lion drew in his breath mighty hard and showed Brer Rabbit, “Grr-grr, grr-grr!”

“Thank you, Mr. Lion,” said Brer Rabbit, “and now I wish you’d be so good as to show me how you snore when you’re really *sound* asleep.”

Well, Mr. Lion, he sucked in his breath and made a snoring noise—“Orr-phm, grrrr-rrl Orr-phm, grrr-rrr!” and it sounded just as if a house was falling down each time!

Brer Rabbit looked astonished. He rolled his eyes round and said: “I always heard tell you were a mighty big man, Mr. Lion, and you surely are!”

Mr. Lion looked pleased. Pretty soon he shut his eyes and began to nod. Then he lay down and stretched himself out, and it wasn’t long before he had begun to snore like he snored when he wasn’t quite asleep—“Grr-grr, grr-grr!”

Brer Rabbit, he lay there. He didn’t say a word. He just kept his eye on the bag where Mr. Lion had put all the birds that Brer Rabbit had shot that day. He lay there with one ear up and both eyes open. By and by Mr. Lion began to snore like he did when he was sound asleep.

“Orr-phm, grrr-rr! Orr-phm, grrr-rr!” he went. When old Brer Rabbit heard this, he got up and sprinkled himself all over with cold ashes from the fire, and then he picked up a whole lot of hot coals and flung them on Mr. Lion. Mr. Lion, he jumped up, he did, and asked who did that, and Brer Rabbit, he lay there on the ground and kicked at his ears with his hind foot and shouted, “Ow! Ow! Ow!”

Mr. Lion saw the ashes all over Brer Rabbit and he thought some one had been along and flung the fire over both of them to burn them. He didn’t know what to think. He looked all round but he didn’t see anyone. He dropped his head and listened but he didn’t hear anything either. Then he lay down again and dropped off to sleep. After a while he began to snore as he had snored before—“Orr-phm, grrr-rr! Orr phrn, grrr-rr!”

Then Brer Rabbit jumped up again and sprinkled some more cold ashes on himself and flung some burning coal on Mr. Lion. Mr. Lion jumped up at once and yelled :

“There it is again!”

Brer Rabbit was lying on the ground, kicking and squalling.

“Hey, Mr. Lion, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, trying to burn me up like this!”

“Brer Rabbit, I never did anything of the sort!” said Mr. Lion. Brer Rabbit looked very doubtful. Soon he put his nose into the air and sniffed.

“Phewee! I smell old rags a-burning!” he said.

Mr. Lion looked angry. “It’s isn’t old rags, Brer Rabbit. It’s my hair a-scorching!”

Well, they both looked all round, they did, but they didn’t see any one at all. Brer Rabbit vowed he was going to keep awake and do some watching next time, because he said he meant to catch whoever it was playing pranks on them. With that Mr. Lion lay down again and it wasn’t long before he dropped off to sleep.

Well, then, the very same thing happened again. The cold ashes fell on Brer Rabbit and the hot coals fell on Mr. Lion! But by the time Mr. Lion jumped up Brer Rabbit was on his feet, shouting and pointing: “I saw him, Mr. Lion! I saw him! He’s gone across the stream! I saw him!”

With that Mr. Lion let out a bellow and jumped right across the stream. He tore off, hoping to catch whoever it was that had thrown the hot coals on him, but he couldn’t see any one at all, though he ran for miles.

And no sooner was he over the stream than old Brer Rabbit, he took up the bag of birds and shot off home lippitty-clippitty, as fast as he could! My, how he laughed to himself as he went, thinking what Mr. Lion would say when he got back to the camp-fire and found nobody there! And what did Mr. Lion say? Well, when he found Brer Rabbit gone and the bag of birds gone, he just pawed up the ground and bellowed loud enough to be heard for ten miles round. All the creatures that heard him, shivered in their shoes —except old Brer Rabbit, and it would take a lot more than that to make him shiver, wouldn’t it!

XI. Brer Rabbit Gets Brer Fox’s Dinner

NOW, AFTER Brer Rabbit had built a steeple on his house, all the other creatures felt as if they wanted to do something to their houses too. Brer Bear put a new cellar under his, and Brer Wolf put up new window-blinds. Some chose one thing and some chose another, but old Brer Fox he took it into his head to nail new shingles on to his roof.

Brer Rabbit heard about this, and what must he do but run round and see how old Brer Fox was getting on. When he got near Brer Fox’s house, he heard a mighty lamming and a blamming, and lo and behold, there was Brer Fox sitting a-straddle on the top of his roof, nailing on wooden shingles as hard as he could.’

Brer Rabbit smelt something nice and he let his eye wander round Brer Fox’s garden a bit. He saw Brer Fox’s dinner sitting in a corner by the fence in a dinner-pail, neatly covered up. It looked so nice that Brer Rabbit’s mouth began to water when he saw it, and he said to himself that he really *must* eat that dinner before he went away from there!

Then Brer Rabbit shouted up to Brer Fox, “How are you doing, Brer Fox?”

“I’m too busy to talk,” said Brer Fox.

“What are you doing up there?” said Brer Rabbit.

“Putting a new roof on my house before the rain comes,” said Brer Fox, hammering away.

“What time is it, Brer Fox?” asked Brer Rabbit.

“It’s working-time with me, that’s what it is,” said Brer Fox, lamming away at his roof.

“Don’t you want any help?” shouted Brer Rabbit.

“I could do with some,” said Brer Fox, “though I don’t now where in the name of goodness I’m going to get any!”

With that Brer Rabbit sort of pulled at his whiskers. Then he said, I used to be a mighty handy man with a hammer, Brer Fox, and I’m not too proud now to climb up and help you.”

“I’m mighty much obliged,” said Brer Fox. And no sooner ad he said that than Brer Rabbit snatched off his coat, leapt up the ladder, and sat down to hammer on shingles. And he put on more shingles in an hour than Brer Fox put on in two.

Oh, he was a clever fellow, Brer Rabbit was! There wasn’t any kind of work that Brer Rabbit couldn’t do, and do it better than any one else too.

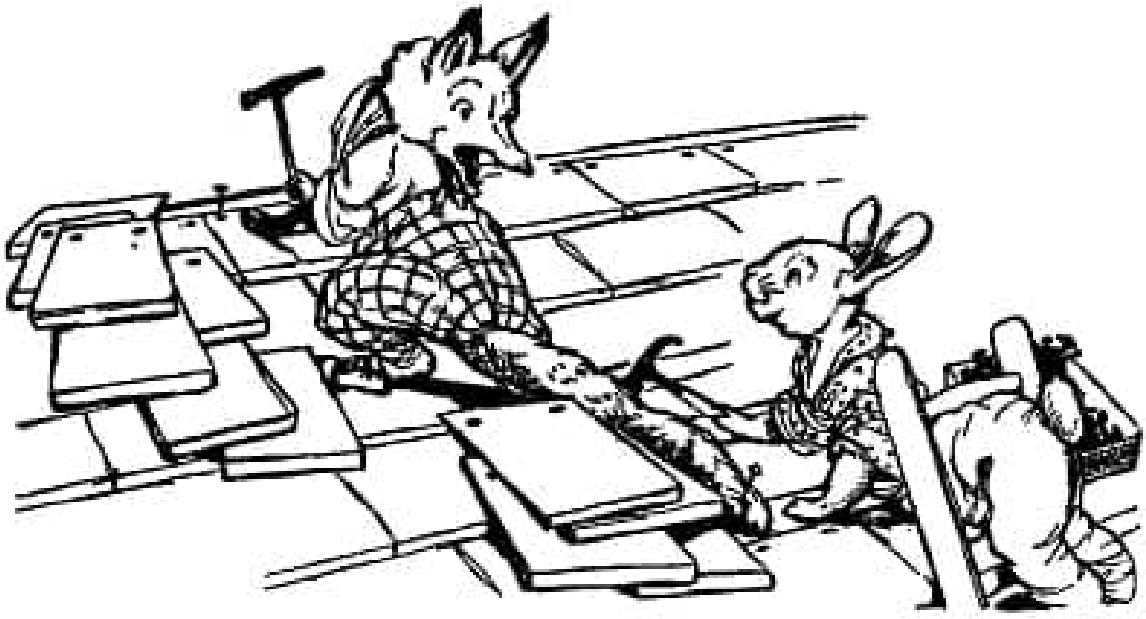
He nailed on shingles till he got tired, Brer Rabbit did, and all the time he was thinking how to get Brer Fox’s dinner. Maybe Brer Fox would offer to share it with him—and maybe he wouldn’t! Brer Rabbit nailed and nailed. He would nail one row and Brer Fox would nail one row. He caught up Brer Fox and passed him—caught him up and passed him again, till by and by, whilst he was a-nailing, Brer Fox’s tail got in his way.

Brer Fox was working just above Brer Rabbit, and his tail hung down on to Brer Rabbit’s row of shingles. Brer Rabbit couldn’t see what he was doing, so he pushed Brer Fox’s tail out of the way.

“I don’t know what in the name of goodness folks have such long tails for!” he said to himself.

Soon Brer Fox’s tail got in Brer Rabbit’s way again. He pushed it to the side. It came back again. He pushed it away. But he hadn’t more than pushed it away before it came back again.

Well, this made Brer Rabbit mighty mad. How can a man nail shingles on a roof if a big tail is in the way all the time? If this tail doesn’t get out of my way I’ll have to do something about it,” said Brer Rabbit to himself. And at that, down came the tail again and nearly knocked Brer Rabbit’s hammer out of his hand.



Well, there was only one thing to do—and Brer Rabbit did it. He nailed Brer Fox's tail to the roof, and then he went on working, glad that the tail wasn't in his way any more. Well, they nailed and they nailed—and bless gracious, it wasn't long before Brer Fox tried to move along, and found that he couldn't! He dropped everything and squalled out:

"Lawks-amussy, Brer Rabbit! You've nailed my tail down! You've nailed my tail down!"

Brer Rabbit stopped hammering. He winked first one eye and then the other, and rubbed his forehead as if he were mighty puzzled.

"Surely I haven't nailed your tail, Brer Fox! Surely I haven't! Look close and see, Brer Fox, but be careful you don't fall. For goodness' sake don't say I've nailed your tail, Brer Fox, if I haven't!"

Brer Fox shouted and yelled, and squealed and kicked.

"Lawks-amussy, Brer Rabbit! I tell you, you *have* nailed my tail down! Un-nail me, Brer Rabbit, un-nail me!"

Brer Rabbit made for the ladder and started down it. He looked up at Brer Fox as if he was mighty sorry, and he said :

"Well, well, well! just to think I should have been so careless as to nail Brer Fox's tail down! I don't know when I've heard anything that made me

feel so mighty bad. If I hadn’t seen it with my own eyes I wouldn’t have believed it, that I wouldn’t.”

Well, Brer Fox yelled, Brer Fox howled, but it wasn’t a bit of good. There he was up on the roof with his tail nailed down hard and fast. Brer Rabbit, he kept on talking all the time he was going down the ladder.

“It makes me feel so bad,” he said, “that I don’t know what to do. Every time I think of it I feel an empty place come in my middle.”

By this time Brer Rabbit was down on the ground, and whilst Brer Fox was yelling, he just kept on talking.

“Yes, there’s a mighty empty place in my middle,” he said, “and if I don’t make a mistake, why, here’s a tin-pail full of dinner in the corner over there that will just about fit that empty place!”

With that Brer Rabbit ran to the pail, took off the lid, sat down and began to eat. He ate up the greens, he ate up the meat, and he drank the gravy. Then he wiped his mouth on his coat-tail and said:

“I don’t know when I’ve been so sorry about anything as I am about Brer Fox’s nice long tail. Surely, surely, I must have been dreaming when I nailed Brer Fox’s fine long tail,” said old Brer Rabbit.

And then he skipped out of the garden, Brer Rabbit did, and it wasn’t long before he was safely at home, telling his old woman how sorry he was about Brer Fox’s lovely long tail.

As for old Brer Fox, he had to sit up on his roof till Brer Wolf came by and un-nailed him. Poor Brer Fox! He might have known Brer Rabbit would trick him somehow.

XII. Brer Rabbit and the Alligator

ONE TIME Brer Rabbit went down to the river to catch some fish for breakfast. He saw something long and brown lying in the mud, and he thought it was a big log. He was pleased, and he ran up to it.

“Here’s a fine big log to fish from. I’ll stand on it to catch the fish.”

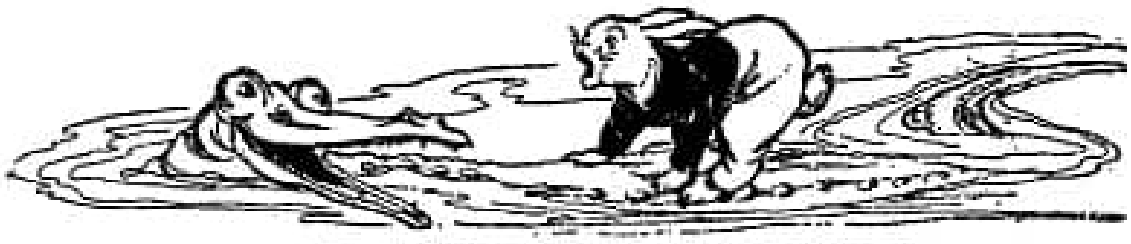
So Brer Rabbit jumped on to the log. He got ready his line. He fixed his hook. As he was doing this the log moved.

Brer Rabbit was mighty scared and he squealed out, “Oh, my goodness!” He looked down—and his eyes nearly dropped out of his head when he saw that what he had thought was a log was really a big alligator.

Mr. Alligator swam away with Brer Rabbit on his back. He flicked his tail round and knocked Brer Rabbit between his two front paws. He grinned very wide indeed, and sniffed at Brer Rabbit with his nose.

“I’ll take you to my home,” said Mr. Alligator. “I’ve got seven eggs there, and when they hatch into baby alligators they shall have you for their dinner.”

Mr. Alligator swam towards the hole in the bank where he lived. He crawled into the hole and carried Brer Rabbit in with him. Brer Rabbit was mighty scared.



“I’ve a good mind to eat you myself,” said Mr. Alligator, looking at Brer Rabbit, who was plump and not at all bony. “Yes, so I have, Brer Rabbit.”

“Please, Mr. Alligator, leave me here to look after your eggs for you,” said Brer Rabbit. “I’m a good nurse, I am. I can look after your eggs whilst

you go a-swimming down the river, and you'll know they're safe. You let me nurse your eggs."

Mr. Alligator flicked his big tail and said, "I'll try you for one day. If you mind my eggs well, I'll not eat you."

Then the old alligator went away and left Brer Rabbit to mind his eggs. He had got to get something for his breakfast. Brer Rabbit sat down beside the eggs. He couldn't get out of the hole, and he was so scared that he shivered like a jelly.

Brer Rabbit waited and waited for Mr. Alligator to come back. By and by he got hungry. He waited and he waited. He minded the eggs and turned them over with his paw. Soon he felt so hungry that he could hardly hold up his head. He sucked his paw. He waited and he waited. The alligator didn't come. He had gone a long way down the river. Brer Rabbit sucked his other paw and waited and waited. Still the alligator didn't come.

Then Brer Rabbit stood up. "Huh!" said he, "I'm not going to starve myself when there's plenty of food under my nose."

He snatched up one of the seven alligator eggs, made a hole in it, and sucked it. It was a big egg and it made a good meal. Brer Rabbit threw the egg-shell right to the back of the hole. He rubbed his middle and grinned.

"Hoo! I feel better now. I don't know what I'm going to tell the old alligator when he comes back, but I don't care. I feel good and I'm not going to worry about any old alligator. I'll think of something when he comes."

Brer Rabbit lay down. He curled himself up on the eggs. He shut his eyes and slept soundly. By and by, when night was almost come, Mr. Alligator came back. He shouted loudly to Brer Rabbit:

"Hey, Brer Rabbit! How can you mind my eggs when you've gone to sleep?"

Brer Rabbit sat up at once. "My eyes have gone to sleep, but my ears are wide awake," he said.

Mr. Alligator flicked his tail and said, "Where are my eggs?"

Brer Rabbit felt a bit scared. Suppose Mr. Alligator counted his eggs?

"They're all here, Mr. Alligator," he said. "Wait—let me count them—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven. Yes, they're all here, Mr. Alligator."

Mr. Alligator was pleased. He opened his mouth wide and grinned. “You’ve minded them well, Brer Rabbit,” he said. “Bring me one out to see. I want to count them.”

Brer Rabbit felt mighty scared at this. He carried one egg out to Mr. Alligator, who sniffed it. Brer Rabbit took it back and brought out the second. Then he took that back and brought out the third—then the fourth—then the fifth—and then the sixth, which was the last one.

After that Brer Rabbit stopped, and didn’t know what to do. Mr. Alligator yelled out, “Fetch me the seventh one.”

Well, Brer Rabbit, he just picked up the first one again and hurried out with that; Mr. Alligator, he didn’t know it was the same egg he had seen the first time, and he just sniffed at it and told Brer Rabbit to take it back.

“You’ve minded them well,” he said to Brer Rabbit. “You can mind them again to-morrow.”

So the next day Mr. Alligator went off again and left Brer Rabbit minding his eggs. And Brer Rabbit felt so mighty hungry that he ate another one. That night when Mr. Alligator came home, Brer Rabbit took him out the five eggs and then took the first two out again, to make seven—and Mr. Alligator, he didn’t know anything was wrong at all.

Well, every day Brer Rabbit ate an egg belonging to Mr. Alligator, and each night he carried the same eggs out so that Mr. Alligator would think there were seven. And at last there was only one egg left.

“I’ll have to carry it out seven times,” grinned Brer Rabbit to himself, when he heard Mr. Alligator coming home.

“Where are my eggs, Brer Rabbit?” called Mr. Alligator.

They’re all here, Mr. Alligator,” Brer Rabbit shouted out from the hole in the bank.

“I met Brer Fox to-day, Brer Rabbit,” said Mr. Alligator, and he told me you are mighty fond of eggs. So this time I think I’ll mark each egg as you bring it, and then I’ll know for certain you haven’t been eating *my* eggs, Brer Rabbit. Ha, you may be a clever man, Brer Rabbit, but Mr. Alligator is just as smart as you. And I tell you this, if so much as one of my eggs is missing I’ll have you for my supper to-night, sure as I’ve got a tail.”

Brer Rabbit shook in his shoes. He felt more scared than he had ever been in his life. But he put on a bold face and shouted back to Mr. Alligator:

“That’s right, Mr. Alligator! You mark your eggs and then you’ll know. And don’t you listen to any tales from Brer Fox—he’s a scamp and I’d just like to tell him so.”

“Bring out the first egg and let me mark it,” shouted Mr. Alligator.

So Brer Rabbit brought out the first and only egg. Mr. Alligator rubbed some mud on it to mark it. He gave it back to Brer Rabbit. “Now bring out the next,” he said.

Brer Rabbit ran back to the hole. He rubbed off the mud on the egg, made it quite clean, and took it out again to Mr. Alligator. “Number two egg,” he said, Mr. Alligator took it and made a mark on it with mud again.

He didn’t know it was the same egg, because Brer Rabbit had rubbed it clean. “Bring out the third egg,” he said.

So Brer Rabbit ran back again, rubbed the egg clean, and took it out for the third time to Mr. Alligator. “Number three egg,” he said.

Well, that rascal of a Brer Rabbit brought the same old egg out seven times to Mr. Alligator, and each time Mr. Alligator marked it with mud and Brer Rabbit rubbed it off in the hole. And when Mr. Alligator had marked the egg seven times, and thought it was the seventh egg, he was very pleased.

“Yes, Brer Rabbit, you’ve minded them well,” he said. “There are my seven eggs all perfect. I won’t eat you for supper.”

“Mr. Alligator,” said Brer Rabbit, popping his head out of the hole, “I can hear Brer Fox a-barking away in the woods yonder. Will you give me leave to go and tell him what I think of him? He’s no business to be telling you stories about me, when I’m doing my duty and minding your eggs so well.”

“Yes, you go and tell him, Brer Rabbit,” said Mr. Alligator. “You go and tell him. But mind you’re back before daybreak to nurse my eggs again. I’ll go in and look after them whilst you’re gone.”

Brer Rabbit thanked Mr. Alligator kindly and hopped out of the hole. He jumped on to Mr. Alligator’s back and ran lightly across it to the bank. He stood there and watched Mr. Alligator go in to his hole to mind his eggs.

And then he didn’t wait any more, because he heard a loud bellow and a great scrambling round in the hole, and knew Mr. Alligator had found he had only one egg left.

My, you couldn’t see Brer Rabbit for dust then. He tore off at top speed, and he didn’t go down to the river again till he heard that Mr. Alligator had gone away for good. He didn’t think Mr. Alligator would ask him to mind his eggs for him again.

XIII. Brer Fox and the White Plums

IT HAPPENED one morning that Brer Rabbit was going through the woods, and he ran bang into old Brer Fox. Brer Fox took hold of Brer Rabbit and looked at him.

“I feel mighty hungry, Brer Rabbit,” said Brer Fox.

“Huh, Brer Fox,” said Brer Rabbit, trying to wriggle away, “I don’t feel hungry myself because I’ve just been eating a whole lot of white plums.” And then Brer Rabbit smacked his lips together and licked his mouth as if he could still taste something nice.

“Brer Rabbit, what in the name of goodness are white plums?” said Brer Fox, astonishe, “and how is it I’ve never seen any?”

“I don’t know why you’ve never seen any,” said Brer Rabbit. “Some folks see straight, some see crooked, some see one thing and some see another. I saw those whit plums, and more than that, I ate them all up! I ate all that were on one tree, but Iexpect there are a lot more about.”

Old Brer Fox’s mouth began to water.

“Come on, Brer Rabbit, come on!” he said. “Show me where those white plums grow!”

Brer Rabbit hung back as if he didn’t want to take Brer Fox. Brer Foxed dragged him forward. “Come on, Brer Rabbit, come on!”

But still Brer Rabbit hung back. Then he said, “Hoo, Brer Fox! You want to get me in the middle of the wood all alone and do something to me. You want to take me out there and scare me.”

Old Brer Fox, he held up his hands and cried, “I declare to goodness, Brer Rabbit, I wouldn’t think of such a thing. Whatever makes you think that? Come on, Brer Rabbit, and let’s go and get those white plums.”

“Hoo, Brer Fox, you play so many tricks on folks that I’m afraid to go anywhere alone with you,” said Brer Rabbit.

“I won’t scare you or do you any harm, Brer Rabbit,” promised Brer Fox. So they set out for the middle of the woods, and Brer Rabbit brought Brer Fox to a wild walnut tree. The walnuts were as green as could be, but

in the bright sunshine they shone pale and white. The tree was loaded down with unripe nuts. Brer Fox looked astonished.

“Are those white plums?” he said. “It’s funny I didn’t know that before.”

Old Brer Rabbit, he scratched himself and said, “Those are the plums. They may not be as ripe as those I had for my breakfast, but those are white plums as sure as anything. There are red plums, and purple plums, and yellow plums, but these plums are white ones.”

“How can I get them?” said Brer Fox.

“You’ll have to do as I did, Brer Fox,”- said Brer Rabbit.

“What’s that?” asked Brer Fox.

“You’ll have to climb up for them, Brer Fox.”

“How can I climb a tree like that?” said Brer Fox, looking up the tall, straight trunk in dismay.

“Oh, grab with your hands, hold tight with your legs and I’ll push you behind,” said Brer Rabbit.

Well, Brer Fox began to climb, and Brer Rabbit, he began to push till, sure enough, Brer Fox got to where he could grab up and catch the lowest branch of the tree. He heaved himself up and there he was! He climbed on up, he did, till he came to where he could reach a green walnut. He picked it and put it into his mouth whole. He chewed it hard—and then, bless gracious, if Brer Fox didn’t forget all his manners! The fruit was so bitter and so hard that Brer Fox nearly fell out of the tree.

He shouted “Ow!” and spat the walnut out of his mouth as if it was poison, and he made such a face that Brer Rabbit had to have a fit of coughing to hide his grins and giggles.

“You’d better come down, Brer Fox, if the white plums aren’t ripe,” he shouted up at last. “Come down and we’ll go somewhere elst.”

Brer Fox started down the tree, and he got along well enough till he came to the lowest branch again. When he got there he stopped. He didn’t see how he was going to get down the long trunk. He had no claws to cling by, like Cousin Wildcat, and he hadn’t much leg either, to hold on with.

Brer Rabbit kept on shouting, “Come on down!” and Brer Fox kept trying to think how to get down.

“Oh, do come on, Brer Fox,” said Brer Rabbit. “I pushed you up, didn’t I, and if I was anywhere near you I’d push you down tool Come on!”

Brer Fox sat clinging to the lowest bough and looked mighty scared. He wasn’t used to climbing trees. By and by Brer Rabbit stood a little way off from the tree and said, “If you’ll jump out this way, Brer Fox, I’ll catch you.”

Brer Fox looked down and he looked all round, and he still looked mighty scared. Brer Rabbit came a little bit closer and shouted, “Hop right down here, Brer Fox, and I’ll catch you.”

Well, he kept on like this till by and by Brer Fox made up his mind to jump into Brer Rabbit’s arms—and what’s more, Brer Fox meant to get hold of old Brer Rabbit, too, and tell him what he thought of his white plums! But he didn’t say that—no, he kept quiet, and just thought of a few things he’d say to old Brer Rabbit.

So Brer Fox jumped straight at Brer Rabbit, but just as he jumped Brer Rabbit hopped out of the way, yelling, “Ow! Ow! Excuse me, Brer Fox! I trod on a thorn! Excuse me, Brer Fox! I trod on a thorn!”

And old Brer Fox, he hit the ground like a sack of potatoes, and all his breath was knocked out of him. When he got up he counted all his legs and his tail to see if they were still there, and then he sat down and licked himself hard.

As for Brer Rabbit, he was nowhere to be seen; but I guess it will be a long time before Brer Fox goes looking for white plums again!

XIV. Brer Wolf Tries to Grow Horns

IT CAME about one day that all the creatures that had horns made up their minds to meet together and have a talk about how to take care of themselves—because the creatures that had teeth and claws were snatching the horned animals round every corner!

So the horned animals sent out word all round the countryside, and planned a meeting in the woods. When the day came, what a large crowd of them there was! They stamped through the bushes, they bellowed and they mooed, they grunted and they snorted. My, it was a fine crowd that met together that day.

Mr. Bull, he was there, and he took the head of the meeting. Mr. Steer was there, stamping his hoof. Miss Cow was there, whisking her tail round. Mr. Billy Goat was there, wagging his beard and talking away to Miss Cow. Mr. Unicorn was there, with his great long horn sticking right up into the air. Mr. Benjamin Ram was there, with his fiddle. And old man Rhinoceros was there too, taking up a mighty lot of room.

There were lots more, too many to tell, for they came in crowds. Old Brer Wolf, he heard about this meeting and he made up his mind he'd go along and see what it was all about—and maybe sneak off with one of Mr. Benjamin Ram's children.

But he didn't know how to go without being known as Brer Wolf. Any creature there without horns would be noticed at once and sent away with a horn in his side if he wasn't careful! So Brer Wolf sat down and thought hard. He meant to go to that meeting—but how could he go there unnoticed?

Pretty soon he grinned to himself and went out to the woods. He cut himself two crooked sticks and tied them on his head! The sticks looked just like horns—and my, but Brer Wolf looked a mighty queer creature! He set off to the meeting, and mixed with all the crowd.

Now as he went to the meeting Brer Rabbit saw him—and he sprang aside into the bushes quickly when he saw a creature looking like Brer Wolf, yet carrying horns on his head! "My!" said Brer Rabbit to himself, "if

it isn’t enough that Brer Wolf’s got claws and teeth—and now he’s got horns as well. I wonder why.”

Well, Brer Rabbit didn’t mean to let Brer Wolf out of his sight, so he went after him, hiding in the bushes all the way. And pretty soon he came to the meeting too, but as he had no horns on his head Brer Rabbit kept in the bushes, and lay there without moving even an ear.

When Brer Wolf got to the meeting Mr. Bull saw him.

“Who are you?” said Mr. Bull, in surprise, for he had never seen a creature quite like Brer Wolf before.

“Baa-aa-aa!” said Brer Wolf. “I’m little Sooky Calf.”

Well, Mr. Bull looked at Brer Wolf very hard over the tops of his spectacles, and Brer Wolf he put down his head and made little bleating noises as best as he could. But just then some one called Mr. Bull away, and Brer Wolf took his place among the crowd, sniffing and smelling every one.

By and by the creatures began talking and telling each other of the bad ways of toothed and clawed animals. Whilst all this was going on, a big horse-fly came sailing around, and Brer Wolf quite forgot that he was supposed to be a horned creature, and he did what no horned animal ever does—he snapped at that fly!

All this time Brer Rabbit had been hiding in the bushes watching Brer Wolf, and when he saw Brer Wolf snap at the horse-fly he laughed out loud.

Mr. Bull heard the laugh and he bellowed out angrily:

“Who’s that laughing away, and showing bad manners at this meeting?”

Nobody answered at all, and there was a silence. Then Brer Rabbit shouted out:

> “Oh, kittle-kattle, kittle-kattle, where are your eyes?
> Whoever saw a Sooky Calf snapping at flies?”

The horned animals all looked at one another and wondered what this meant. Brer Wolf felt mighty angry with Brer Rabbit, but he couldn’t do a thing about it.

Before very long something bit Brer Wolf on the back of his neck, and before he knew what he was doing he sat right down and scratched himself well with his hind foot—a thing that no cow or bull ever did!

Well, Brer Rabbit shouted with laughter once more to see him, and disturbed the meeting again. Mr. Bull bellowed away in anger—and as soon as he had stopped and there was a dead silence, Brer Rabbit sang out at the top of his voice again:

"Scritchum-scratchum, look at his paws,
See that Sooky Calf scratching with claws!"

Brer Wolf was mighty scared, but it didn't seem as if any of the horned creatures knew what Brer Rabbit meant, for they took no notice of him at all.

Brer Wolf sat down on the ground behind Mr. Benjamin Ram, hoping that Mr. Ram would hide him well from Mr. Bull's eye. He put his long tail out behind him, and Sis Cow stepped on it by mistake. Brer Wolf gave a yell, and Brer Rabbit gave a great shout of laughter again.

"Who's that a-laughing and a-spoiling the meeting?" roared Mr. Bull. Nobody spoke a word—and then old Brer Rabbit he shouted loudly again from where he was hidden in the bushes :'

"Rinkum, sinkum, ride him on a rail,
That Sooky Calf's got a long, bushy tail!"

Brer Wolf crouched down behind Mr. Benjamin Ram and tried to hide his tail. Nobody seemed to take much notice of him—except Mr. Bull—and he had his eye on Brer Wolf all right! Yes—Brer Wolf noticed that Mr. Bull was looking straight at him, and he didn't like it a bit. He felt mighty scared!

The meeting went on, but Brer Wolf felt more and more scared because he saw Mr. Bull edging nearer and nearer to him through the crowd. And Brer Rabbit, he wasn't going to be quiet, not he! He shouted out at the top of his voice :

"One and one never can make six,
Sticks aren't horns, and horns aren't sticks!"

And just about then Mr. Bull saw that Brer Wolf's horns weren't horns at all but two bits of crooked stick! He roared in a rage and ran straight at Brer Wolf. He put down his head, he did, and he ran at Brer Wolf like a thunderbolt.

Brer Wolf gave a yelp and tore away. Mr. Bull grazed his horns against Brer Wolf’s sides and gave him two good cuts. My, how Brer Wolf jumped!

He rushed away from the meeting, and he was so mad with Brer Rabbit that he reckoned he would pretend that the wounds Mr. Bull had given him had killed him. So he sent word round that he was dead.

Well, Brer Rabbit thought it might well be so, for he had seen Mr. Bull’s horns going straight at Brer Wolf. And he thought he would pop round to Brer Wolf’s house and see if he really was dead. But he remembered how Brer Wolf had tried to trick him that way before, and he didn’t go inside the house—he only put his head round the door and peeped in.

Brer Rabbit saw some of the other creatures there, and he said “howdy” to them. Then he said, “Poor Brer Wolf! So Mr. Bull killed him! Dear, dear!

Tell me, folks, has Brer Wolf grinned yet?”

“No, Brer Wolf hasn’t grinned,” said the creatures there. “Whyever should he grin, Brer Rabbit?”

“Ah,” said Brer Rabbit, “wolves are strange creatures, folks. They aren’t dead till they grin. You tell me when Brer Wolf grins and I’ll know he’s dead for good.”

Well, when Brer Wolf heard this, he wanted Brer Rabbit to think he was dead, so he grinned from ear to ear! And then, of course, Brer Rabbit knew he was alive all right, and he picked up his hat and stick and ran off for home—and every now and again he would sit down and laugh fit to kill himself!

XV. Brer Terrapin Gets Some Fish

BRER TERRAPIN didn’t mind if he lived on land or in the water, and it was mighty useful to him sometimes to be able to slide into the river when he wanted to get out of somebody’s way. But it wasn’t any use sliding into the water when Brer Mink was about, because Brer Mink could jump into the river and swim and dive till he began to think nobody could beat him at it!

Now one day Brer Mink was going along by the riverside with a nice string of fish swinging on his stick, when who should he come across but old Brer Terrapin? Every one teased Brer Terrapin, he was such a queer old one-and-six-pence, and most folks thought he was as woolly-headed as a silly old sheep. But Brer Terrapin was smarter than a good many!

“Heyo, Brer Mink!” said Brer Terrapin. “Where did you get that nice string of fish?”

Brer Mink was feeling very proud of himself those days, and he grinned down at Brer Terrapin. “Heyo, old stick-in-the-mud,” he said. “Where do you suppose I got the fish—up in the meadow? I got them down in the river, of course.”

Brer Terrapin looked astonished.

“Well, well, well, Brer Mink!” he said. “Down in the river, you say? Who’d have believed it?”

“Oh, I’m mighty good in the water, Brer Terrapin,” said Brer Mink, talking very biggitty.

“That’s so, Brer Mink,” said Brer Terrapin. “But bless gracious, if a landsman like you starts going into the water what’s going to happen to the water-folks? It looks all wrong to me, Brer Mink, you taking to the water like this!”

“Looks or no looks, I’m going to catch fish if I want to, said Brer Mink.

Brer Terrapin swayed his head from side to side and said, “Brer Mink, you don’t mean to say you can swim under the water and catch fish that way? You don’t mean to say you can keep under long enough to do that?”

“Oh, that’s easy enough,” said Brer Mink, still talking mighty biggitty. “*You* might find it difficult, old stick-in-the-mud.”

“Don’t call me old stick-in-the-mud,” said Brer Terrapin, offended.

“All right, old stick-in-the-mud,” said Brer Mink, and he gave Brer Terrapin’s shell a poke with his stick. Brer Terrapin began to feel mighty mad, and he swayed his head from side to side again. But he still spoke very sweetly and kindly to Brer Mink.

“Well, Brer Mink,” said Brer Terrapin, “I’d like to see you swim under the water, that I would. I’m a landsman myself, I am, and it’s a long time since I got my feet wet, but I don’t mind going into the water with you and having a match to see who can keep under the longest. No, I don’t mind that at all. I expect you’ll beat me, but never mind that.”

“Huh!” said Brer Mink, pleased. “Beat you? Of course I’ll beat you, old stick-in-the-mud! Yes—and that’s all you’ll do too—just stick right down in

the mud—and I'll have to get you out! Come along and we'll see what you do."

"We'll go down into the river," said Brer Terrapin, "and the one that can stay under the water the longest can walk off with that string of fish of yours!"

"Huh!" said Brer Mink, "you don't really think you'd get that, do you, Brer Terrapin? Come on now and I'll show you what a fine fellow Brer Mink is!"

The two of them went to the edge of the water. Brer Mink laid down his string of fish on the bank. Then he and Brer Terrapin began to wade into the water.

"Ow, Brer Mink!" said Brer Terrapin, pretending not to like the water at all. "Ow! This water feels mighty cold, and it isn't any higher than my waist yet. Goodness knows how I'll feel when it's up to my chin!"

"Come on, Brer Terrapin, come on," said Brer Mink. "If you don't hurry we'll never get to the deep part!"

Well, they waded right in, and Brer Terrapin, who was pretending to shiver with the cold, said, "Now then, Brer Mink, we'll dive down, and the one that stays under the longest is the one that gets the fish!"

"That's right," said Brer Mink.

"Go!" said Brer Terrapin, and under they both went. Of course Brer Terrapin could stay under the water far longer than Brer Mink, and Brer Mink ought to have known it. They stayed under and they stayed under till by and by Brer Mink simply had to come up for breath, and mighty glad he was to be at the top of the water again, for he was pretty nearly bursting for want of air.

Then, after a while, Brer Terrapin stuck his nose out of the water.

"Heyo, Brer Terrapin—seems you've beaten me!" said Brer Mink, in the greatest astonishment.

"Well, well!" said Brer Terrapin, as if he felt surprised too. "We'll make it the best out of three, Brer Mink. We'll have three dives, and the one that wins twice shall have the fish! If I beat you this time, then the fish are mine. If I get beaten, then we'll have a third trial."

With that, down they went—but Brer Mink, he made up his mind that even if Brer Terrapin won he wouldn't have the fish! No—he'd pick them up from the bank and gallop off through the woods with them, and that old stick-in-the-mud of a Brer Terrapin wouldn't be able to catch him. Brer Mink grinned to himself as he went under for the second time.

Brer Terrapin saw the grin—and he knew what Brer Mink was thinking. So Brer Terrapin he just dived a little way under the water and then came up at once again. And whilst old Brer Mink was still under the water, gasping for air, Brer Terrapin gobbled up every single one of the fish!

Brer Mink came up at last, and as he came up Brer Terrapin slid down under the water again, and he slid so smoothly that he didn't leave even a bubble! He didn't stay there very long though—he came up quickly, and panted and puffed at the top as if he'd been down for hours and hadn't any breath left at all!

Well, old Brer Terrapin came up, he did, and Brer Mink yelled out that he'd beaten him again. But before Brer Mink could say another word Brer Terrapin took a look round at the bank and yelled out, "You're a rascal, Brer Mink, that's what you are, you're a rascal!"

"What have I done now, Brer Terrapin?" asked Brer Mink in astonishment.

"Don't ask *me*, Brer Mink! Look up there on the bank where you've been eating those fish, and then ask yourself what you've done! You're a rascal, you are!"

Brer Mink looked round and, sure enough, the fish were gone. Old Brer Terrapin kept on talking.

"You came up first, didn't you, Brer Mink, and while I was down there in the water, bursting for air, you were sitting up here chewing up the fish which should have been mine, because I've won them!"

"I *didn't* eat the fish!" said Brer Mink. "I tell you I didn't Brer Terrapin."

"Well, who did then?" said Brer Terrapin. "Who did then? Tell me that, Brer Mink. I can't see any one around for miles that could have taken those fish and eaten them."

Brer Mink, he climbed up the bank and looked all around too—but he couldn't see any one either.

“Well, I just don’t believe you, Brer Mink,” said Brer Terrapin. “You’ve tricked me, you have. You said I was an old stick-in-the-mud, as woolly-headed as a silly sheep—and it seems as if you’re right, Brer Mink, so it does. You’ve tricked me properly. If you go on like this you’ll be worse than Brer Rabbit!”

Now when Brer Terrapin told Brer Mink he was nearly as bad as Brer Rabbit, Brer Mink felt proud, because every one knew that Brer Rabbit was the cunningest and smartest creature of the lot. So Brer Mink gave a laugh, he did, as if he knew a lot more than he was going to tell, and he poked Brer Terrapin on the shell.

“All right, all right, Brer Mink,” said Brer Terrapin, shuffling off. “I’m not going to get mad with you, because I think it s a mighty clever trick you played, but all the same you ought to be ashamed of yourself for tricking an old stick-in-the-mud like me, so you ought!”

And with that Brer Terrapin went off, but after he got out of sight he drew back into his house and laughed and laughed till he nearly cracked his shell! He wasn’t such an old stick-in-the-mud as Brer Mink thought!

XVI. Brer Fox’s Fish-Trap

ONE YEAR there was a very dry summer, and the rivers and ponds got dried up so that there was hardly any drinking-water to be found. Even the big river got low, and as for the streams, some of them disappeared altogether.

The animals all had to go to the big river to drink. They met there, and the biggest ones drank first, and they drank so much that there was hardly any left for the little ones.

Brer Rabbit didn’t mind very much. He always knew how to look after himself, and if any one was going to get water it was old Brer Rabbit. The other creatures saw his footprints by the riverside and they waited for him, but they never caught him.

Brer Fox wasn’t so lucky. He always seemed to go for a drink when Mr. Lion and Brer Bull and the big creatures were there, and they crowded him out and chased him away. So poor Brer Fox, he was always thirsty and he didn’t know what to do about it.

“I’ll go along to Brer Rabbit’s house and see how he manages to get a drink,” said Brer Fox to himself, and off he set.

Brer Rabbit was at home. He was sitting outside his front door singing a little song :

“Oh, Mister Rabbit, your eye’s mighty big!
Yes, sir, yes! It’s made for me to see!
Oh, Mr. Rabbit, your tail’s mighty short,
Yes, sir, yes! But it just fits me!”

“Howdy, Brer Rabbit?” said Brer Fox.

“Howdy, Brer Fox?” said Brer Rabbit. “What are you wanting this morning? You look mighty down in the mouth.”

“Brer Rabbit, I can’t seem to get anything to drink,” said Brer Fox. “When I go to the big river Mr. Lion roars at me, and Brer Bull crowds me out, and the rest of them chase me away. Now, you’re a smart fellow, Brer Rabbit—can’t you tell me how to get a drink when I want one?”

Well, Brer Rabbit, he sat and thought hard for a few minutes, then he grinned. “Oh yes, Brer Fox,” he said, “I can tell you what to do. You’ve come to the right man for help, you have.”

“What shall I do then, Brer Rabbit?” asked Brer Fox.

“You go home and rub some treacle over yourself,” said Brer Rabbit. “Then go out into the woods and roll over and over in some leaves. They will stick to the treacle, and you’ll be covered from head to foot with them.”

“What shall I do after that?” asked Brer Fox, in astonishment.

“Well, you go down to the river and hide in a bush,” said Brer Rabbit. “And when the creatures all come to get a drink, you jump out at them, Brer Fox—and you’ll scare them all into the middle of next week!”

“Huh!” said Brer Fox. “That sounds mighty good to me, Brer Rabbit. I always said you were a smart fellow!”

“I haven’t finished yet,” said Brer Rabbit, who was really enjoying himself. “After you’ve scared every one away, go and wallow in the water and drink all you like—and pretty soon, Brer Fox, the fishes will all come swimming up to get a bite of treacle, and you’ll be able to catch as many as you want to. And, if you’re a nice fellow, Brer Fox, I’ll take it kindly of you if you’ll bring me one of the fish for myself.”

“I’ll do that, Brer Rabbit,” promised Brer Fox. “Yes, I’ll surely do that.”

With that off he ran home. He went to his cupboard and took down a jar of treacle. He smeared it all over himself from head to foot—and a mighty sticky mess he looked when he had finished! Then he went out into the woods and rolled over and over in the leaves and rubbish there till he looked as queer as could be!

When Brer Fox was ready he went down to the river and hid himself. By and by all the creatures came along to drink the water, and whilst they were a-pushing and a-scuffling and a—snuffling, Brer Fox, he jumped out of the bushes at them, and switched himself round and round, squealing loudly.

Well, all the creatures looked at this queer thing and they didn’t know what to make of it at all! Brer Wolf saw him first and he was so startled that

he jumped right over Brer Bear’s head to get away! Brer Bear shot backwards, yelling, “Who’s that? Who’s that?”

Then every one saw the queer-looking creature and rushed away like apples rolling downhill, and before Brer Fox had time to do a few more squeals he had the river to himself! The creatures didn’t go very far. They soon stopped and looked round. Then they began to creep back a little nearer, trying to make out what this fearsome-looking thing was that had given them such a fright. When they got near enough to see, there was Brer Fox walking up and down, up and down, switching his tail about and squealing whenever he thought about it.

The animals didn’t know what to think at all. They watched, and Brer Fox marched up and down. Still they watched and still he marched up and down. It went on like this till Brer Fox thought it was about time he made himself into a fish-trap and wallowed in the water as Brer Rabbit had said. Then the fishes would come up to him for a bite of treacle and he’d get an armful of them.

So Brer Fox marched into the water and lay down in it. He rolled over and over and wallowed in it, watching for the fishes to come. But they didn’t come and they didn’t come.

Brer Fox didn’t know what Brer Rabbit knew! Brer Rabbit knew that as soon as Brer Fox went into the water the river would wash away the leaves and the dirt and the treacle—and there would be Brer Fox, plain for any one to see!

Well, the water washed away the treacle, and off went the leaves and the dirt downstream, and there was Brer Fox, just himself and nobody queer at all!

The animals were all watching Brer Fox rolling in the water—and bless gracious, how they stared when they saw the leaves floating off him and saw that he was just Brer Fox! Then they knew he had played a trick on them and they were mighty wild.

“Brer Wolf! Brer Wolf!” yelled Brer Bear. “You head him off down there, and I’ll head him off up here. We’ll catch Brer Fox sure as a fly’s got wings!”

Brer Fox, rolling in the water, still watching for the fish that didn’t come, heard Brer Bear’s voice, and looked up to see what the fuss was about.

When he saw Brer Bear coming one way and Brer Wolf coming another, he jumped out of the river in a mighty hurry. He took a look down at himself and saw that the treacle and leaves had gone—and then off he went as if a hive of bees were on his tail.

He wasn't any too soon. As it was, Brer Bear got the tip-end of his tail—another moment and he'd have caught him!

Brer Fox went home through the woods, wet and angry. As he passed Brer Rabbit's house he saw him out in the porch, rocking himself in a rocking-chair and singing his song :

"Oh, Mister Rabbit, your ears are mighty long!
Yes, sir, yes! My ears are made to last!
Oh, Mister Rabbit, your teeth are mighty sharp!
Yes, sir, yes! They cut down the grass!

Brer Fox was going by without a word, but Brer Rabbit saw him. "Heyo, Brer Fox!" he shouted. "Have you brought me a fish from your fish-trap?"

But Brer Fox, he didn't answer a word. He gave Brer Rabbit one look, and if looks could have killed—well, Brer Rabbit would have dropped down dead, there isn't a doubt of that!

XVII. Brer Fox tries another Fish-trap

NOW ALTHOUGH Brer Fox was very angry with Brer Rabbit for tricking him into making himself a fish-trap, he couldn't help thinking it certainly would be a mighty fine idea to make a real fish-trap. So he set to work to make one.

Brer Rabbit saw him working away at the trap and he walked over to see him.

"What are you making, Brer Fox?" he said.

"A fish-trap," said Brer Fox, rather proud of himself. "Why don't you make one too, Brer Rabbit? Fish is a change from fresh meat and salad."

"Thank you very much, Brer Fox," said Brer Rabbit politely, "but I'm not wanting fish for dinner just now, and anyway I'm too busy to make fish-traps."

Well, Brer Fox, he finished his fish-trap at last, and then he went in his boat up and down the river hunting for a good place to put it. He hunted and he hunted and at last he found the right place. He put this trap there and set it.

Then he rubbed his hands in delight and thought of all the fish he would catch. He didn't know that Brer Rabbit was sitting on the bank under a bush, watching him fix that trap. No—if Brer Fox had known that, he wouldn't have felt quite so happy.

Brer Rabbit watched Brer Fox carry stones and rocks to put on his trap to hold it in place. He grinned to see Brer Fox getting hotter and hotter.

Brer Fox felt very tired after all his hard work. He went home, washed his face and hands, and sat down to rest. After he had taken a good long rest he went down to the river to see if he had caught any fish in his trap. He was rather afraid of water-snakes when he put his hand in the trap, but all the same he felt all round the trap to see if he could feel any fish—and there were none there at all.

So back home he went once more. "I guess I must wait a few days before I go and look again," said Brer Fox. "I'll go down to my trap at the

end of the week.” So towards the week-end he went down to his trap, felt all round it, and was mighty disappointed to find no fish there.

It went on like this till Brer Fox was quite tired of running to and from his fish-trap and never finding a thing there. And one day, when he was looking around his trap, he saw foot-prints that told him some one had been along there.

“Yes, some one’s been robbing my fish-trap,” said Brer Fox. “And if I don’t make any mistake I sort of know who that some one is!”

He got into his boat, paddled it to an overhanging bush nearby and slid under it with his boat so that he was quite hidden. He watched all the morning. Nobody came. He watched all dinner-time and after, and nobody came. Towards the evening, just as Brer Fox was making ready to come out from under the bush and slip off home, he heard a noise by the fish-trap. He peeped out—and there was old Brer Rabbit in a boat, poling it along to the trap.

Brer Rabbit wasn’t using a paddle to get his boat along, as Brer Fox did —no, he was standing up in his boat and using a long pole to push it along, just as we do when we are punting. Old Brer Rabbit, he stood in the back part of the boat, pushed his pole to the bottom of the river, gave it a shove, and sent his boat along at a good speed.

Brer Fox felt mighty mad when he saw this, and he watched and waited. “I’ll just wait till Brer Rabbit comes by me and then I’ll go after him in my boat and catch him!” said Brer Fox. “I guess I can paddle my boat quicker than he can pole his!”

Brer Rabbit poled right up to the fish-trap, bent down and put his paw into it. He pulled out a great big fish—then he reached in and pulled out another fish, then he pulled out a third, and it went on like this till he had got his boat almost full of fish from Brer Fox's fish-trap!

Just about then Brer Fox paddled his boat out from under his bush and came towards Brer Rabbit.

"Ah-yi, Brer Rabbit!" yelled Brer Fox. "You're the man that's been robbing my fish-trap all this time! I've got you this time! Oh, you needn't try to run! I've got you this time for sure!"

Brer Rabbit jumped round and saw Brer Fox. He flung the last fish into his boat, grabbed for his pole and started off, with Brer Fox just behind him. Now Brer Fox could paddle much faster than Brer Rabbit could pole, and Brer Rabbit knew this—but did he care? Not a bit of it! Old Brer Rabbit had a trick up his sleeve all right. He had more fun in getting away from Brer Fox that time than ever he had before in all his life!

How old Brer Bull-Frog laughed to see what happened! He was a-sitting there on the bank and he saw it all. Brer Rabbit had to stand at the back of his boat to pole it—and as soon as Brer Fox's boat touched his, Brer Rabbit took his pole and pushed hard at Brer Fox's boat. And the harder he pushed, the farther forward he sent himself and the farther backward went Brer Fox! Oh, it looked mighty easy to old Brer Bull-Frog sitting on the bank there, and all Brer Fox could do was to shake his fist and grit his teeth—but he couldn't get in front of Brer Rabbit's boat, no matter how he tried.

And when Brer Fox stopped to smack Brer Bull-Frog on the nose for laughing so much, Brer Rabbit slipped ahead, landed on the bank, took up the fish, and raced for home. Oh no, Brer Fox, you can't catch old Brer Rabbit!

XVIII. Brer Rabbit Saves Brer Terrapin

ONE TIME Brer Fox was going down the big road and he saw old Brer Terrapin going to his home. Now Brer Fox knew Brer Terrapin was a good friend to Brer Rabbit, and it seemed to him it was a mighty good time to catch him. Brer Fox didn't have any kindly feelings towards people who were friends of Brer Rabbit.

Brer Fox ran back to his own house, which was not far off, and got a bag. Then he ran down the road again, rushed up behind Brer Terrapin, caught him up and threw him into the bag. He slung the bag across his back, then off he went, galloping home.

Brer Terrapin, he shouted, but it wasn't any good. He wriggled and struggled, but that wasn't any good either. Brer Fox just went on going, and there was old Brer Terrapin in the corner of the bag, and the bag tied up hard and fast.

But where was Brer Rabbit whilst all this was going on? Where was that long-cared, hoppetty-skippetty creature, that up-and-down-and-sailing-round Brer Rabbit? He wasn't far off, you may be sure!

Brer Fox went trotting down the big road with the bag on his back—and Brer Rabbit was sitting in the bushes just by the side of the road. He saw Brer Fox trotting by and he saw the bag on his back too.

"Now what's Brer Fox got in that bag?" said Brer Rabbit to himself. "I don't know what it can be."

Well, Brer Rabbit sat in the bushes and wondered and wondered, but the more he wondered the less he could think what it was. He watched Brer Fox a-trotting down the road, and still he sat in the bushes and wondered.

"Huh!" said Brer Rabbit at last, "Brer Fox has no business to be trotting down the road carrying something other people don't know about. I guess I'll go after Brer Fox and find out what's in the bag!"

With that, Brer Rabbit set out. He hadn't got a bag to carry and he went mighty quickly. He took a short cut, and by the time Brer Fox got to his house Brer Rabbit had had time to get into his strawberry-bed and trample

down a whole lot of plants. When he had done that, he sat down in some bushes where he could see Brer Fox coming home.

By and by Brer Fox came along with his bag across his back. He unlatched his door, he did, and then he threw Brer Terrapin down in a corner in the bag, and sat down to rest himself, for Brer Terrapin was mighty heavy to carry.

Brer Fox had hardly put a match to his pipe when Brer Rabbit stuck his head in at the door and shouted:

“Brer Fox! Oh, Brer Fox! You’d better take your stick and run out yonder. Coming along just now I heard a fuss going on in your garden, and I looked round and there were a whole lot of folk in your strawberry-bed, just a-trampling the strawberries down! I shouted at them, but they didn’t take any notice of a little man like me. Make haste, Brer Fox, make haste! Get your stick and run. I’d go with you too, but I’ve got to get home. You’d better hurry, Brer Fox, if you want to save your strawberries. Run, Brer Fox, run!”

With that Brer Rabbit darted back into the bushes, and Brer Fox dropped his pipe and grabbed his stick and rushed out to his strawberry-bed. And no sooner was he gone than old Brer Rabbit hopped out of the bushes and into the house.

He didn’t make a bit of noise. He looked round and there was the bag in the corner. He caught hold of it and felt it to see what was inside. And suddenly something yelled:

“Ow! Go away! Let me alone! Turn me loose! Ow!”

Brer Rabbit jumped back astonished. Then before you could wink an eye he slapped himself on the leg and laughed out loud.

“If I’m not making a mistake, that’s nobody’s voice but old Brer Terrapin’s!” said Brer Rabbit.

“Is that Brer Rabbit?” yelled Brer Terrapin.

“It is,” said Brer Rabbit.

“Then hurry up and get me out,” said Brer Terrapin. “There’s dust in my throat, grit in my eyes, and I can hardly breathe. Get me out, Brer Rabbit.”

“Heyo, Brer Terrapin,” said Brer Rabbit. “You’re a lot smarter than I am —because here you are in a bag and I don’t know how in the name of goodness you’ve tied yourself up in there, that I don’t!”

Brer Terrapin tried to explain and Brer Rabbit kept on laughing, but all the same he untied the bag, took Brer Terrapin out and carried him outside the gate. Then, when he had done this, Brer Rabbit ran off to where he knew some wasps had a nest just about as big as a football.

The wasp-nest was in a hollow tree. Brer Rabbit slipped in at the bottom of the tree and there was the nest inside. He slapped his paw over the hole where the wasps went in and out, knocked the nest down into his bag, and there he had it, wasps and all!

Then back he raced to Brer Fox’s house and flung the bag down on the floor, tied up fast. Well, the way he slammed that bag down on the floor stirred all those wasps up and put them into a very bad temper! They buzzed fit to make holes in the bag!

Soon Brer Rabbit saw Brer Fox coming down the back-garden, where he had been looking for the folks that had trodden down his strawberries. He had been putting the plants straight and picking off the squashed fruit, and Brer Fox was feeling mighty mad about it too.

By the time Brer Fox got indoors Brer Rabbit was off and away into a bush—and there he sat with old Brer Terrapin, waiting to see what would happen.

Brer Fox went indoors, hitting the ground with his stick, and vowing that he would shake Brer Terrapin to bits, he was in such a bad temper.

He slammed the door and Brer Rabbit and Brer Terrapin waited. They listened, but at first they couldn’t hear anything. By and by they heard the

most tremendous noise!

“Seems like a whole crowd of cows running round and round inside Brer Fox’s house,” Brer Rabbit said to Brer Terrapin.

“I can hear chairs a-falling,” said Brer Terrapin.

“I can hear the table turning over,” said Brer Rabbit.

“I can hear the crockery smashing,” said Brer Terrapin.

“Huh!” said Brer Rabbit, enjoying himself, “Brer Fox must be having a fine game with those wasps. What a surprise he got when he opened the bag to get you—and found a wasp’s nest instead!”

Just as Brer Rabbit said that, Brer Fox’s door flew wide open and out rushed Brer Fox, squalling and howling as if two hundred dogs had got him by the tail!

He ran straight to the river, he did, and plunged in to get rid of the wasps on him. Brer Rabbit and Brer Terrapin sat there in the bushes and laughed and laughed, till by and by Brer Rabbit rolled over and said :

“One more laugh, Brer Terrapin, and you’ll have to carry me home!”

“Get on my back then, Brer Rabbit, get on my back,” said Brer Terrapin. “I’ll carry you all right. Shoo! That will teach Brer Fox not to go a-catching an old fellow like me and putting him into a dusty bag!”

Brer Fox came out of the river at last—but to this day he doesn’t know how it was that though he put old Brer Terrapin into a bag, it was a nest of wasps that came out! And you may be sure Brer Rabbit never told him!

XIX. Brer Rabbit’s Pond

AT THE back of Brer Rabbit’s house was a round pond. Sometimes, when it got very dirty with leaves falling into it, Brer Rabbit cleaned it out.

One time he cleaned it out beautifully, and then he stood and sighed by the edge of his empty pond.

“If only the rain would come and fill it!” he groaned to himself. “If the rain doesn’t come I’ll have to fill my big watering-can fifty times and carry it from the tap to the pond!”

Well, the rain didn’t come. The sun shone out, and the sky was as blue as forget-me-nots. Not a rain-cloud was to be seen!

“It’s no good!” said Brer Rabbit at last. “I’ll have to fill the pond myself.” So he picked up his big watering-can and filled it at the tap by the side of his house.

He dragged it to the pond and emptied the water in—slishy-sloshy, slishy-sloshy! It made a lovely noise. Brer Terrapin came by, and looked over the wall when he heard the noise.

“My!” he said to Brer Rabbit, “that’s a fine game you’re having this morning! It’s fun to play with water like that. Let me have a turn.”

“You can’t drag my big watering-can along, old slow-coach!” said Brer Rabbit. But Brer Terrapin soon showed him that he could! He balanced the big can on his back and walked slowly to the pond. He stood with his back to the pond and jerked the can. It poured all the water out at once.

“My, but it’s heavy!” panted Brer Terrapin. “I guess you’ve got a hard job this morning, Brer Rabbit. Why don’t, you get your friends to come along and help you?

“Huh! As if Brer Fox and and Brer Wolf would fill my pond for me!” said Brer Rabbit.

“You let me manage things for you,” said Brer Terrapin with a sly grin. “You let me manage things, Brer Rabbit. You’ve always been a good friend to me, and if you’ll let me have a swim in your pond now and again, I’ll just see if I can’t get you a bit of help this morning!”

“All right, Brer Terrapin, you try,” said Brer Rabbit, and he watched Brer Terrapin crawling out of his gate.

Well, Brer Terrapin, he went down the road, and soon he met Brer Fox.

“Heyo, old shellyback, where have you been this long time?” said Brer Fox.

“Oh, I’ve just come from Brer Rabbit’s,” said Brer Terrapin. “And my, he gave me such a treat! He let me help him pour water into his pond! It went slishy-sloshy, slishy-sloshy into the empty pond, a real treat to see it! It’s fun to play with water, isn’t it, Brer Fox? But it’s no use you going along to Brer Rabbit’s, for I don’t suppose he’ll give *you* a treat like that. It’s only because I’m a friend of his.”

“Well, I’m a friend of his too!” said Brer Fox. “Haven’t I known him for years and years? My, I guess we’ve done more things together than any other creatures in the world. If I want to pour water into his pond, I just *know* he’d let me!”

“All right, you go and see, Brer Fox,” said Brer Terrapin, putting his head inside his shell to grin to himself. “You go and see!”

So Brer Fox went along to Brer Rabbit’s, and he soon heard Brer Rabbit singing, “Hi ho! Hi ho!” and he heard the sound of water splashing merrily into the pond.

“Heyo, Brer Rabbit!” yelled Brer Fox. “You seem to be might busy this morning. That’s a fine job you’re doing.”

“Oh, a mighty fine job!” said Brer Rabbit, winking to himself. “A job that every one would like to do, Brer Fox. I just gave Brer Terrapin a turn at it, because he’s a very old friend of mine, and I like giving him a treat.”

“Well, I’m an old friend of yours too,” said Brer Fox. “You let me have a turn as well, Brer Rabbit. I don’t like Brer Terrapin going around saying he’s the only friend of yours that helps you with your pond. You let me have a turn too.”

“Why, Brer Fox, I’d be pleased to,” said Brer Rabbit. “Yes, yes, you have a turn—have two turns—have ten turns if you want to! I’m not one to be selfish. No—if my friends want a share in my pleasures, they are welcome to them. You take the can, Brer Fox, and have a good time!”

So Brer Fox dragged the heavy can to and fro a good many times, whilst Brer Rabbit sat on the warm sunny wall and smoked his pipe and talked.

Now it wasn’t long before Brer Bear and Brer Wolf came along and looked over the wall too.

“Heyo, Brer Rabbit,” said Brer Bear. “We’ve just met Brer Terrapin, and he’s been a-boasting and a-bragging that you’ve let him fill up your pond because he’s such an old friend of yours. And he said he was mighty certain you wouldn’t give anyone else that treat—and here we see Brer Fox playing with the water too!”

“Oh, Brer Bear,” said Brer Rabbit politely, “that’s too bad of Brer Terrapin to go around saying I won’t give any of my friends but him a chance to play with my pond. Brer Fox, he came along and said just the same thing—and I’m giving him a treat too! If you want to join in, you just say the word. I’m not the man to stop anyone having a good time!”

Well, by this time Brer Fox was nearly worn out with carrying the heavy can. So he spoke up at once.

“And I’m not the man to be selfish either. I’ll let Brer Bear and Brer Wolf have a turn now. That’s only fair!”

So Brer Wolf and Brer Bear came in at the gate and set to work to fill the can and empty the water into the pond. My, but it was nearly full now! It only needed about four more cans and it would overflow.

Cousin Wildcat looked over the wall and grinned. Brer Rabbit hopped off to the garden-seat, for he didn’t trust Cousin Wildcat’s claws.

“Heyo, Brer Rabbit,” said Cousin Wildcat. “I just heard from Brer Terrapin that you’ve got Brer Fox and Brer Wolf and Brer Bear doing all your hard work for you. Ah, you’re a smart one, Brer Rabbit, no doubt about that! But you don’t catch me coming along and carrying your heavy cans for you all morning long. No—my brains are as good as yours *any* day, Brer Rabbit!”

Brer Fox, Brer Wolf, and Brer Bear stood and stared in surprise. Then they turned their eyes on Brer Rabbit, who began to feel mighty uncomfortable. But he put a bold face on it and spoke up well.

“Brer Fox! Brer Wolf! Brer Bear! Are you going to stand there, and let Cousin Wildcat make out I’ve tricked you, when all you’ve been doing is to have a treat? You go for him right now, and make him say he’s sorry!”

So Brer Fox, Brer Wolf, and Brer Bear jumped over the wall and chased Cousin Wildcat right into the middle of the wood. He fled up a tree and laughed at them. “Go and ask Brer Terrapin!” he cried. “Maybe you’ll believe *him*!”

But when the three of them hunted for Brer Terrapin, he was nowhere to be found! He was having a fine swim in Brer Rabbit’s nice full pond—and every now and again he would come up to the top and wink his eye at Brer Rabbit. Then down he’d go to the bottom—ker-blinkety-blunk!

XX. Mister Lion’s Soup

ONCE MISTER Lion put on his tall hat, reached for his stick, and set out to have his dinner at Brer Possum’s Hotel. He felt hungry, and he made up his mind to have a really good dinner.

“I’ll have oxtail soup!” said Mister Lion to himself as he walked along, swishing off the daisy—heads with his stick which was very wrong of him. “Yes, oxtail soup, rich and thick and tasty. Aha!”

He reached Brer Possum’s Hotel and went up the steps. As soon as the hall-porter saw him he rushed to greet him, for Mister Lion was a very honoured customer. If people didn’t pay attention to him, he got very angry, so the waiters flocked round him, and Brer Possum himself helped him off with his coat.

“Give me the best table,” said Mister Lion in his growly voice. So they gave him the best table and he sat down, tucking his tail neatly under the chair.

“What will you have to eat, Mister Lion sir?” asked Brer Possum, beckoning to Brer Hare, Brer Coon and Brer Hedgehog, all waiters.

“Bring me some oxtail soup,” said Mister Lion in a very commanding sort of voice.

Brer Possum flew to tell the cook to make some oxtail soup. Very soon it was ready. It was poured into a silver tureen, and taken to Mister Lion’s table. He sniffed at it as it was poured into his soup-plate.

“It smells good,” he said

“It *is* good,” said Brer Hare, the waiter, waiting for Mister Lion to begin tasting it. But Mister Lion didn’t. He sat there and didn’t taste it at all.

“What’s the matter, Mister Lion?” asked Brer Hare, seeing a frown beginning to come on Mister Lion’s great forehead.

“I can’t eat this soup,” said Mister Lion.

“Oh, sir!” said Brer Hare, alarmed. “I hope it’s good! Is it too hot?”

“I don’t know,” said Mister Lion. “I can’t eat it.”

Brer Hate flew to get Brer Coon, and took him over to Mister Lion's table. Brer Coon bowed anxiously before the great Mister Lion.

"What is the matter, sir?" he asked.

"I can't eat this *soup*!" said Mister Lion.

"Has it too much pepper in it?" asked Brer Coon anxiously. "The cook does sometimes use the pepper-pot too much."

"I don't know," said Mister Lion. "All I know is that I can't eat my soup!"

Brer Coon flew to get Brer Hedgehog. "He says he can't eat his soup," said Brer Coon, nodding his head backwards towards Mister Lion. "What *are* we to do?"

"I'd better go and see if it's got too much onion in," said Brer Hedgehog, dropping his napkin in his hurry, and tripping over his prickles. "He doesn't like onion."

So he scampered to Mister Lion's table and bowed low. "Mister Lion, sir," he said, "I'm sorry to hear about this. Has your soup got too much onion in?"

"I don't know," said Mister Lion, in a rage. "I tell you I can't eat my soup!"

"Well, I'll fetch Brer Possum," said poor Brer Hedgehog, in a panic, and he shot off to get the master of the hotel. Brer Possum was horrified to hear that Mister Lion couldn't eat his soup, and he hurried at once to his table.

"I'm sorry the soup is not to your liking," he said. "Do tell me what is wrong, Mister Lion. You didn't find a fly in it, I hope, or a caterpillar?"

“No,” growled Mister Lion, looking fiercer than ever.

“Well, has it too much salt in it?” asked Brer Possum, shivering with fear, for he knew Mister Lion’s habits when he was displeased.

“I don’t know,” said Mister Lion. “All I say is—I can’t—eat—my—SOUP!”

“Well, sir, I’ll fetch the cook who made it,” said Brer Possum, trembling. “It was Brer Coon’s old woman who made it. just wait a minute and I’ll get her.”

In a few moments Brer Coon’s wife came shuffling along, looking very scared indeed, twisting up the corners of her apron, and looking ready to cry, for she was very much afraid of Mister Lion.

“Good morning, sir,” she said, dropping a curtsey. “I hear you can’t eat the soup I made.”

“No, I can’t possibly,” said Mister Lion gloomily.

“But, sir, it’s made of the very best ox-tail that ever was,” said Brer Coon’s old woman eagerly. “And I didn’t put much onion into it, and only a little pepper and salt, and it was nice and hot when it left my kitchen.”

“All the same, I can’t eat it,” said Mister Lion, still more gloomily.

“Well, let me take it away and bring you another kind,” said Mrs. Coon, and she stretched out her paw to take the plate. But Mister Lion shouted at her so loudly, and showed his teeth so fiercely, that she backed away in alarm.

“Leave my soup!” shouted Mister Lion. “I want to eat it, but I can’t. I HAVEN’T GOT A SPOON!”

Well, well, well, well! Just to think of that! Brer Coon got him a spoon, and Brer Hedgehog gave him one, and Brer Possum and Brer Hare did too. They were all so pleased to find that nothing was really wrong with the soup. As for silly old Mister Lion, he only had himself to blame if the soup was cold!

XXI. Brer Rabbit Catches Mice

NOW ONCE it happened that Brer Fox stored away some fine carrots and juicy turnips in his little old shed. He was mighty pleased with them, for he had grown them himself, and meant to have them in his soup that winter.

And of course old Brer Rabbit smelt them out, and made up his mind to share those carrots and turnips—though he didn't mean to ask Brer Fox's permission! So, each night, he crept to the door of the shed and opened it quietly. In he went, and nibbled a carrot here, and a turnip there.

Well, Brer Fox was angry to find his stores nibbled like that. He stared round his shed each morning and wondered who the thief was. He saw Brer Rabbit passing by in the distance and he called to him.

"Heyo, Brer Rabbit! Do you know anything about nibbled carrots?"

"Nibbled carrots!" said wicked Brer Rabbit, pretending to be surprised. "You don't mean to say you've got carrots in that shed that have been nibbled, Brer Fox?"

"That's just what I do mean to say," said Brer Fox, looking at Brer Rabbit in a very straight way.

"It must be that you've got mice there," said Brer Rabbit. "I'd put a few mouse-traps down, Brer Fox, that's what I'd do!"

And with that old Brer Rabbit went off whistling, telling himself he must remember to look out for a mouse-trap when he went a-nibbling that night! But Brer Fox didn't put any traps down. No, he kept awake himself, and when he heard the door of his shed creaking he jumped out of his chair and crept out into the garden. He went to his shed, and flashed his lantern inside.

Brer Rabbit had heard him coming—but he couldn't get out of the door in time. So what did he do but turn his back to the wall of the shed, and stick his bobtail out through a hole in the wood. And there he was a-sitting when Brer Fox popped his head in at the door!

"Oho, Brer Rabbit! So I've just caught you, have I!" said Brer Fox.

“What do you mean, caught me?” asked Brer Rabbit, in almost astonished voice. “Here I’ve come to spend the whole night in your shed, to catch the mice that nibble your carrots and you say you’ve caught me! That’s not a nice way to repay a good deed, Brer Fox, and I’m really surprised at you.”

Brer Fox looked astonished. “How are you catching mice for me?” he said.

“Why,” said Brer Rabbit, “can’t you see what I’m doing? I’m sitting here patiently with my tail out of a mouse-hole—and I’m waiting for a mouse to come along and nibble it—and then I’ll pull in my tail like a shot and drag the mouse in at the hole for you!”

.“I’ve never heard of that way of catching mice before,” said Brer Fox, looking even more astonished. “Have you caught any yet?”

“Sh!” said Brer Rabbit. “I think I can feel one a-nibbling!”

Brer Fox shushed. But after a time Brer Rabbit sighed and shook his head.

“No,” he said. “That one ran away. It’s a pity my tail is so short, Brer Fox. Now, if I had a fine long one like yours, I’d catch twenty mice a night!”

“Would you really?” said Brer Fox, most interested. “Well, what about me poking my tail out through a hole and seeing if I can catch some?”

“Oh, I wouldn’t bother to do that,” said Brer Rabbit. “You wouldn’t have the patience to sit still long enough for a mouse to come.”

“Indeed I would,” said Brer Fox. “I’m as patient as you are, any day.”

Well, in the end Brer Fox found a good big mouse-hole and stuck his tail out of it so that it twitched on the ground outside the shed. And there he sat, whilst Brer Rabbit sat near him, his bobtail out too.

“Ha! I can feel one a-nibbling!” said Brer Rabbit suddenly. “Catch hold of my tail tightly, Mouse! Catch hold of it, I say!”

Brer Rabbit suddenly jerked his tail in and turned round to look at it as if he expected to see a mouse hanging on to the hairs. But there was nothing there, of course.

“Dear, dear!” said Brer Rabbit, sounding most disappointed. “What a pity! I made sure there was one that time. Keep still, Brer Fox, and see if he

comes to your tail. And if you feel him a-nibbling, just call out, ‘Catch hold of my tail, there, catch hold of my tail!’”

Now, just about daybreak, as Brer Rabbit very well knew, Brer Bear came along that way. And that was what Brer Rabbit was planning for. He listened and he listened for Brer Bear’s footsteps, and pretty soon he heard them—clump-clump-clump.

He began to talk to Brer Fox so that he wouldn’t hear them. “I can feel a mouse a-nibbling and a-gnawing!” he said. “Catch hold of my tail, there, catch hold of my tail! You shout too, Brer Fox, in case there’s one at your tail too.”

So Brer Fox shouted out, “Catch hold of my tail, there, catch hold of my tail!”

And just at that moment Brer Bear passed the shed, and saw Brer Fox’s tail hanging out of the hole, and he heard him shouting, “Catch hold of my tail, there!”

“Funny thing!” said Brer Bear, sniffing at Brer Fox’s tail, and touching it with his paw. “It looks like Brer Fox’s tail. But what is it doing here? And why should I catch hold of it?”

When Brer Fox felt Brer Bear sniffing at his tail, he got very excited, because he really thought it was a mouse at last.

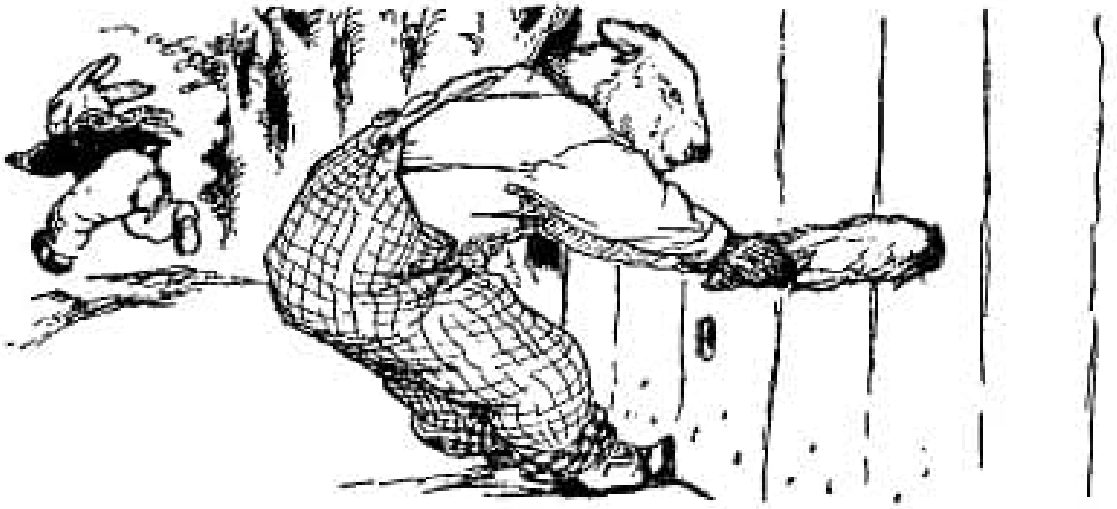
“Catch hold of my tail, there!” he shouted. “Catch hold of my tail!”

Brer Bear caught hold of his tail and held it tight. Brer Fox suddenly looked most astonished. This couldn’t be a mouse! “Something’s got my tail!” he said to Brer Rabbit in a scared voice. Brer Rabbit ran to the door when he heard that welcome news, for he knew that Brer Fox couldn’t get away to go after him then. He shot out of the door.

“I’ll go and see what it is that’s got your tail!” he shouted—and he took a look at Brer Bear and winked.

“Hold on for a bit, Brer Bear!” he said. “Hold on for a bit!” And with that he scampered away through the wood, lippitty-clippitty, and he didn’t stop to laugh till he was safe at home with his door locked! As for Brer Fox, there he had to stay in the shed till Brer Bear let go his tail. And what a quarrel there was then, to be sure, with Brer Fox calling Brer Bear names,

and Brer Bear shouting at Brer Fox. They don’t really know to this day that old Brer Rabbit played a mighty clever trick on them!



XXII. Brer Rabbit and the Pears

ONE DAY, when Brer Rabbit trotted through the wood, he happened to see a little pear tree that was hung with large pears. He stopped and had a look at it.

“Those pears will be ripe next week,” he said to himself. “And I’ll be the one to pick them! My, won’t they be juicy and sweet!”

So, the next week, he trotted by that way again and, sure enough, the pears were as ripe as could be. But somebody was up the tree picking them! It was Brer Bear. Brer Bear liked a nice juicy apple or pear, and he had had his eye on that tree for a long time. And there he was, up in the tree, picking away as fast as he could, putting the ripe yellow pears into his basket, and now and then popping one whole into his big mouth.

Now Brer Rabbit wasn’t in Brer Bear’s good books at all just then, for he had taken some honey from a bee-tree that Brer Bear had specially wanted for himself. So it was quite a shock to Brer Rabbit to see Brer Bear there. He guessed Brer Bear wouldn’t give him any of those pears just now.

Brer Rabbit looked at the little pear tree. He didn’t like to climb up it in case Brer Bear pushed him down. No, that wouldn’t do at all. But how in the world was he going to get any pears for himself?

Brer Rabbit sat and thought. Brer Bear hadn’t seen him yet. Brer Rabbit crept off and went to Brer Terrapin’s house under the water. He called down to him.

“Heyo, Brer Terrapin! Are you in this morning?”

“Oh yes, I’m in all right,” said Brer Terrapin, and he swam up to the top of the water. “How are you feeling, Brer Rabbit?”

“Mighty hungry, Brer Terrapin,” said Brer Rabbit. “Mighty hungry. And I’ve got a plan to get some fine juicy pears, if you’ll come along and help me.”

Well, Brer Terrapin liked pears too, so he clambered out of the water, shook his feet, and they set off together. Brer Rabbit told Brer Terrapin his plan, and Brer Terrapin laughed till he nearly cracked his shell.

By and by they came up to the pear tree. Brer Bear was still up there, picking the pears. Brer Rabbit and Brer Terrapin sat down under the tree for all the world as if they didn't know any one was there at all.

"Well, Brer Terrapin," said Brer Rabbit in a loud voice, "how's yourself?"

"Not too good, Brer Rabbit, not too good," said Brer Terrapin. "You know, ever since that tiresome Brer Bear tried to pull my tail out, I've had the trimble-trembles."

"Oh, he's a bad fellow, Brer Bear is," said Brer Rabbit. "I'm no friend of his and he's no friend of mine."

Now Brer Beat, sitting up in the tree, was most astonished and annoyed to hear all this. He sat there quietly, listening with both his ears.

"He's mean and he's selfish," said Brer Terrapin loudly. "That's what he is. And I wish he could hear me say so."

Brer Rabbit stopped himself giggling. "He's greedy too," he said. "Do you know, if he finds a bee-tree, he never even offers me a sip of the honey there?"

Now this was a real story, for Brer Bear had often given Brer Rabbit a share of his honey. Brer Bear, he sat up in the tree boiling with rage, longing to get at Brer Rabbit and give him a good slap.

"He's a slow chap," said Brer Terrapin. "My, you call me slow, Brer Rabbit—but if I ran a race with Brer Bear I'd be at the winning-post before he was half-way there!"

"And he hasn't as many brains as a caterpillar," said Brer Rabbit, enjoying himself. "My, Brer Terrapin, what would Brer Beat say if he heard us talking like this about him?"

"What would he *do*?" giggled Brer Terrapin.

"I guess he'd throw something at us," said Brer Rabbit. "Yes, I guess that's what he'd do. Throw something at us, hard, and hit us! Ho ho! it's a good thing he isn't here, and hasn't got anything to throw!"

Well, this was too much altogether for Brer Bear. He gave a fierce growl, picked a large pear and threw it down the tree.

"I *am* here!" he grunted loudly. "And I have got something to throw! Take that—and that!"

Brer Rabbit and Brer Terrapin jumped up as if they were too astonished for anything. Brer Rabbit saw the pear coming and neatly caught it. The other one smashed on Brer Terrapin's shell. Brer Terrapin put out his head and began to lick it off with great delight.

"Goodness! It's Brer Bear up the tree!" said Brer Rabbit, pretending to be most upset and surprised. "He's heard all we said! Brer Bear, Brer Bear, now just stop throwing things at us. You'll hurt us!"

"That's just what I mean to do, you nasty tale-telling creatures!" roared Brer Bear, feeling angrier and angrier. He took a pear from his basket and threw it straight at Brer Rabbit. "Take that! Huh, I'll teach you to sit under a tree and talk like that about me! I'm throwing *this* pear for your story-telling—and *this* for your meanness—and *this* for your unkindness!"

Thud, plop, plop! Down came the pears! Some of them Brer Rabbit caught, others smashed on the ground and Brer Terrapin gobbled them up. One rolled away and Brer Rabbit picked it up.

"Stop, Brer Bear, stop! You'll hurt us!" cried Brer Rabbit, knowing quite well that Brer Bear would go on all the more if he were begged to stop. And so Brer Bear did.

He was in such a rage that he threw down every pear in his basket, and picked every pear off the tree. Down they came, plop, plop, plop, and Brer Rabbit picked them up in glee.

At last there were no more pears left to throw. Brer Rabbit looked up and winked at Brer Bear."

"Well, you won't be wanting your basket now, will you? he said. "So what about throwing that down too, Brer Bear? It would be mighty useful for me to carry these pears home!"

And then Brer Bear knew that it was all a trick to get his pears, and he growled in rage. He began to climb down the tree, grunting and growling, and Brer Rabbit knew it was about time to go.

"Come on, Brer Terrapin," he said. "We've been here long enough. We'll go home."

So off they went, the two of them—Brer Rabbit with his pockets crammed full of ripe pears, and Brer Terrapin with his shell dripping with pear juice. My, how they giggled when they thought of Brer Bear throwing down his pears! Wicked Brer Rabbit—whatever will he do next?

XXIII. Brer Rabbit and the Greens

ONCE upon a time Brer Fox and Brer Bear went to get some greens for dinner. Brer Fox put his into a bag and Brer Bear put his into a basket.

And just as they walked around the field to go home, who should they see sitting fast asleep, leaning against a cabbage, but old Brer Rabbit!

“Look!” said Brer Fox, putting down his bag and creeping up to Brer Rabbit. “We’ve got him this time, as sure as ninepence!”

Brer Rabbit snored just a little. He was very tired, for he had been fishing all night long and had caught nothing at all. His whiskers fluttered as he breathed, and Brer Fox grinned to himself. This was easy! To think of all the times cunning old Brer Rabbit had tricked him—and now he was here for the taking!

Brer Fox caught hold of Brer Rabbit by the scruff of the neck, and there he dangled in the air, a very frightened creature.

“What’s this? What’s this?” squealed Brer Rabbit.

“Nothing much,” said Brer Fox, stuffing Brer Rabbit into his big coat-pocket and holding him there. “I’ve caught you at last, that’s all, Brer Rabbit. You shouldn’t go sleeping out in the sun like that for every one to see you!”

“Brer Fox, your pocket is too warm,” said Brer Rabbit, scrambling round. “Let me out for a breath of air.”

“You’re going to stay there,” said Brer Fox. He picked up his bag of greens, and together he and Brer Bear went homewards, grinning at each other to think how easily old Brer Rabbit had been caught at last.

“Brer Fox, Brer Fox, I’m smothering!” cried Brer Rabbit. “Let me get my head out of your pocket, do! Just my head, so that I can breathe.”

“It’s no good your talking and talking and asking and asking,” said Brer Fox. “I’ve listened to you too much, Brer Rabbit, and this time I’m not paying any attention to what you say. You’re going home in my pocket, and my, but I’ll have a good dinner to-day!”

Brer Rabbit didn’t say any more. He just sat and thought hard.

Soon Brer Fox came to his house and asked Brer Bear in to have a drink of his honey-syrup, a thing Brer Bear was very fond of. The two put down their bag and basket of greens and Brer Fox banged the door.

Suddenly Brer Rabbit jumped right out of Brer Fox's pocket and ran scurrying round the room.

"Run, run!" said Brer Fox, laughing. "The windows are shut, Brer Rabbit, and the door is shut too, and Brer Bear is standing in front in case you think of opening it! Run, Brer Rabbit, and hide yourself somewhere. I'll find you, there's no doubt about that!"

Brer Rabbit didn't say a word. He ran under the bed and found a mat there. He hid beneath it. Brer Fox peeped under the bed and laughed.

"Ho, Brer Rabbit, aren't you clever enough to find a better place than that?" he cried. "I can see you, humping up that mat of mine! I can see you."

Brer Rabbit said never a word. He stayed under the mat until he heard Brer Fox pouring out the honey-syrup, and then he wriggled out from the mat and went quietly to where Brer Fox's big slippers stood at the other side of the bed.

Brer Rabbit took the slippers to the mat and humped them underneath so that it looked for all the world as if Brer Rabbit was still hiding under the mat himself!

Brer Rabbit grinned a little grin. He crept quietly to where Brer Bear had put down his basket of greens, and when neither Brer Fox nor Brer Bear was looking his way, he squirmed into the basket between two big cabbages. And there he lay as still as one of the greens themselves!

Soon Brer Bear said he must be going. He picked up his basket of greens and put them on his shoulder.

"Well, see you to-morrow, Brer Fox," he said. "Thanks for the honey. Now, where's that rascal of a Brer Rabbit? Don't let him slip out when I open the door, or you'll lose your dinner!"

Brer Fox looked under the bed and saw the humped-up mat. "It's all right!" he said. "Brer Rabbit is still hiding under the bed! I can see where his back hunches up my mat!"

Brer Rabbit knew it was Brer Fox's own slippers hunching up the mat, and he grinned to himself in Brer Bear's basket of greens.

"Well, good-bye," said Brer Bear, opening the door. He went out and shut it. "Huh!" he said to himself. "Old Brer Fox has got Brer Rabbit at last. No doubt about that at all!"

He walked on home. Presently Brer Rabbit gave a deep groan in the basket. Brer Bear stopped, very startled. He looked all round. Nobody was about at all.

Brer Rabbit groaned again. "Ooohahooohah!"

"Gracious goodness!" said Brer Bear, alarmed. "Whatever's that? Who's there? Is anybody ill? Shall I fetch a doctor?"

"Oooohah!" groaned Brer Rabbit in the cabbages, thoroughly enjoying himself now.

"It sounds as if it's in my basket!" said Brer Bear, terrified. "Can it be the cabbages talking?"

"Ooooh-ah-OOOOOOOH!" said Brer Rabbit, with a louder, deeper groan than ever. "Put me dow-oo-ow-oo-wn!"

"It *is* those cabbages!" squealed poor Brer Bear, and he put his basket down with a bump. Brer Rabbit made two holes in a cabbage leaf and stuck his big eyes through them. Just as Brer Bear opened the lid he saw the eyes looking at him, and he gave a squeal and fled down the road.

"My cabbages have eyes!" he cried. "My cabbages are looking at me!"

'Brer Rabbit hopped out of the greens and laughed till he cried. Then he ate half a cabbage, put the basket on his back, and went off home, whistling.

On his way he passed Brer Fox's house, and saw Brer Fox looking gloomily out of the window.

"Heyo, Brer Fox!" called Brer Rabbit. "Did you find me under the mat all right? I hope you enjoyed your dinner!"

And with that he galloped off with the greens, lippitty-clippitty—just in time too, for Brer Fox jumped clean through the window and nearly caught him by the tail!

XXIV. Brer Rabbit is Nearly Caught

ONCE BRER RABBIT and Brer Terrapin sat talking and drinking lemonade in Brer Rabbit's kitchen. They were great friends, and my, how they laughed when they thought of all the times they had tricked Brer Fox!

But just as they were laughing, Brer Terrapin suddenly stopped, with his mouth wide open, staring hard at something.

"What's the matter, Brer Terrapin?" said Brer Rabbit, in surprise. "Have you got a bone stuck in your throat? Don't look like that!"

"Brer Rabbit, I saw Brer Fox and Brer Wolf pass by your window!" said Brer Terrapin, in a very scared voice. "I believe they're come to call on you. I don't like it, Brer Rabbit, I don't like it!"

"Quick!" said Brer Rabbit, as he heard a great banging at his front door. "Hide! Get under that saucepan, Brer Terrapin! And I'll get under this bucket!"

So in a twink the two were well hidden. There stood the pail and the saucepan upside down by the sink with the brushes and brooms—and Brer Terrapin and Brer Rabbit were trembling underneath I

"Blam-blam-blam!" Brer Fox knocked on the door again—and then, as there was no answer, he opened the door and looked round.

"Come on in, Brer Wolf," he said. "There's no one home. Brer Rabbit must have just gone out with some one. Look, they've been having lemonade, and they've left some in the jug! Let's finish it!"

"Right!" said Brer Wolf, pleased, for he was thirsty. "Then we'll hide under the bed and wait for Brer Rabbit to come back. My, he'll be properly caught this time! He won't find that any of his tricks will help him now."

Brer Rabbit was boiling with rage under his bucket. To think that Brer Wolf and Brer Fox were drinking his lemonade! And goodness knew how long they would stay under the bed waiting for him!

"Glop-glop-glop!" Brer Wolf finished the lemonade, and then scrambled under the bed. He left his tail hanging out. Brer Fox got under the bed too. It was a tight squeeze, and he left *his* tail out as well!

“Hope he won’t be long!” said Brer Wolf, who felt uncomfortable under the small bed.

“Sh!” said Brer Fox. “If you talk maybe he’ll hear you, and then he’ll be scared away.”

The two of them lay still. Brer Rabbit and Brer Terrapin hardly dared to breathe. Brer Wolf suddenly sneezed and nearly blew the bed up into the air. Brer Fox was angry.

“Brer Wolf, can’t you be quiet even for one moment?” he said.

“Don’t talk to me like that, Brer Fox,” said Brer Wolf, in a huff. “I couldn’t help sneezing. Be quiet yourself!”

Whilst they were talking, Brer Rabbit and Brer Terrapin moved a little nearer the bed—but Brer Terrapin’s saucepan made a little scraping noise. Brer Fox heard it.

“What was that?” he said. “Was that you making a noise again? Do be quiet, Brer Wolf—clanking like that!”

“Clanking! Who’s clanking?” said Brer Wolf, annoyed. “What do you think I am? A wheel-barrow?”

Brer Rabbit and Brer Terrapin moved a little nearer. Brer Rabbit’s bucket made a clanking noise on the stone floor. Brer Wolf heard it.

He turned to Brer Fox. “Ha!” he said. “You made a noise then—I heard you! Be quiet!”

“I didn’t make any noise,” said Brer Fox. “Sh! Is that some one coming?”

But it was only the wind blowing the curtains. Brer Rabbit and Brer Terrapin moved a little nearer, and the noise made Brer Wolf and Brer Fox jump.

“This house is full of noises,” said Brer Fox. “I’d hate to live here!”

Now Brer Rabbit was so near Brer Wolf’s tail that he could reach out a paw from under his bucket and pinch the long tail! Pinch!

“Ooo-ow!” cried Brer Wolf, in a rage. “What did you do that for, Brer Fox?”

“What did I do what for?” said Brer Fox, in astonishment, thinking that Brer Wolf must be mad. “I didn’t do a thing!”

“You pinched my tail!” shouted Brer Wolf. “And now you’ve done it again!”

“I didn’t!” said Brer Fox—and just then Brer Terrapin reached out a front paw and dug his claws into Brer Fox’s bushy tail. “Ooooh! You’ve pinched *my* tail! Brer Wolf, don’t behave so stupidly. Brer Rabbit will hear us!”

Brer Rabbit pinched Brer Wolf’s tail again and Brer Terrapin dug his claws into Brer Fox’s. The two creatures slapped at one another, and then began to fight under the bed. They tried to stand up—and over went the bed on top of Brer Terrapin’s saucepan and Brer Rabbit’s bucket!

They were scared, for they could not see what had happened. They tried to back away to the sink again under their bucket and saucepan, but they were covered with bedclothes, and couldn’t see where they were going.

But Brer Wolf and Brer Fox saw the lumps under the bedclothes moving, and they stared in astonishment. “Look!” said Brer Wolf. “The bed’s coming alive! Let’s go!”

“It’s something under the clothes!” said Brer Fox. He jerked off the blankets, and there he saw the bucket and the saucepan—and Brer Terrapin, trying to get away, put out all his feet, which showed under the saucepan’s edge!

“Ow! It’s a saucepan with feet!” squealed Brer Fox, in fright. “And look at that bucket! It’s walking! It’s alive too!”

Brer Wolf and Brer Fox gave on scared look at the jiggling saucepan and bucket and fled out of the door as fast as they could go.

Brer Terrapin tipped over his saucepan, and Brer Rabbit threw off his bucket. Then they both sat and laughed till Brer Terrapin nearly cracked his shell and Brer Rabbit nearly cracked his sides!

“I guess old Brer Wolf and old Brer Fox won’t come *this* way again in a hurry,” said Brer Rabbit, as he and Brer Terrapin put the bed into its place again. “My, you must have looked queer with your feet sticking out under the saucepan, Brer Terrapin! It’s a mercy we got under so quickly—we’d have been somebody’s dinner by now, if we hadn’t!”

XXV. Brer Bear Gets a Shock

ONE TIME Brer Bear went to look at his honey store and he found that half his honey-jars were empty. Well, he ranted and he roared, he howled and he stamped, and he vowed he'd find the thief if it took him a month of Sundays.

He went stamping out of his house, and who should he meet but old Brer Wolf, come to se if Brer Bear was away from home—and Brer Wolf liked a lick of honey himself, and he was the thief all right!

"Someone's been at my honey, Brer Wolf—someone's been at my honey!" roared Brer Bear. "Who do you think it can be? I'm just going to squeeze the life out of him!"

Brer Wolf looked alarmed. He didn't want to be squeezed in Brer Bear's big arms! "Well," he said, "I saw that rascal of a Brer Rabbit the other day with honey on his whiskers. Ah, yes, Brer Bear, sure enough you'll find it's Brer Rabbit who's the thief!"

"I thought as much!" yelled Brer Bear in a rage. "He's always where he shouldn't be. But he's played his tricks once too often!"

He rushed off to find Brer Rabbit, and as he went through the wood, what did he see but old Brer Rabbit sitting on a tree-stump combing his fine whiskers.

"Are you combing the honey out of your whiskers?" shouted Brer Bear, and he rushed at Brer Rabbit.

"Now, now, Brer Bear!" cried Brer Rabbit, in alarm, as Brer Bear knocked him over. "What's the matter? Can't I comb my whiskers?"

"Not if they've got honey on them!" roared Brer Bear angrily. "I'm going to squeeze you, Brer Rabbit—yes, I'm going to squeeze you, and make you say where you've put all my honey!"

Brer Wolf crept up and saw the fight. He rubbed his paws in glee, for he guessed that old Brer Rabbit wouldn't come bobbing up *this* time! Brer Bear got hold of Brer Rabbit and began to hug him so that he couldn't breathe.

“Stop it, Brer Bear, stop it!” panted poor Brer Rabbit. “I tell you, I don’t know anything about your honey.”

“Now you just tell me where you’ve put my honey and I’ll let you go,” said Brer Bear. “Go on—tell me. If you don’t, I’ll squeeze you to bits!”

Well, Brer Rabbit could see that Brer Bear meant what he said all right, and he began to think how he could stop him.

“Brer Bear, Brer Bear, how can I tell you where your honey is if you squeeze all my breath out of me!” panted Brer Rabbit.

Brer Bear stopped squeezing quite so hard. “Will you tell me, Brer Rabbit?” he said.

“Brer Bear, I’m not certain where your honey is, but I think maybe you’ll get a nice surprise if you look into that hollow tree that’s growing by the pond in the wood,” said Brer Rabbit, trying to get his breath again.

“Are you sure I shall get a surprise if I look there?” asked Brer Bear squeezing Brer Rabbit tightly again.

“Brer Bear, stop hugging me!” begged Brer Rabbit in alarm. “You’re squeezing my chest right through my back! I tell you, you’ll surely get a fine surprise if you look inside that tree!”

Brer Bear let Brer Rabbit go. He ambled off to the tree, and Brer Wolf and Brer Rabbit followed him, though poor Brer Rabbit could hardly walk.

Well, Brer Bear, he got to the hollow tree all tight. He climbed up to where the hole was, and put in his paw. But it was a very deep hole and he could feel nothing.

“Get down into the hole, Brer Bear, get down into the hole!” squealed Brer Rabbit. So Brer Bear jumped right down into the hole, and pawed about for the honey.

But in that hole lived Cousin Wildcat, his Wife, and his family—and when old Brer Bear jumped right down up top of the lot of them, there was a great disturbance!

My goodness! All those wildcats shot out their twenty claws, and clawed at Brer Bear. Cousin Wildcat and his wife buried their sharp teeth into his paws, and before Brer Bear knew what was happening he was in the middle of a fierce fight

“Ooooph! Grumph! Ow-wow-wow!” growled Brer Bear.

“Yee-ow-yee-ow, yee-ow!” yelled all the wildcats together.

Brer Bear shot out of that hollow tree a whole lot quicker than he went in! My, how quickly he came out! Brer Rabbit had never seen a bear move so quickly!

“You said I’d find my honey there!” roared Brer Bear to Brer Rabbit.

“I didn’t!” yelled back cheeky Brer Rabbit. “I just said you’d get a fine surprise if you looked in that hollow tree. But if you want to find the thief, Brer Bear, just come and look at Brer Wolf here! He’s got honey on his nose—and I guess he’s been after yours!”

‘ And with that Brer Rabbit turned and ran, and old Brer Wolf, he got such a slap on the nose from angry Brer Bear that he yowled like a hundred wildcats at once!

As for Brer Bear, he wouldn’t go near a hollow tree for months, not even when he saw bees coming out of it and there was honey there. No—he was much too afraid of getting another fine surprise!

XXVI. Brer Rabbit and the Butter

IT HAPPENED once that the creatures made a lot of very fine butter, and they agreed to put it into a cool shed, and share it between them.

But Brer Rabbit wasn't to have any at all, because he was such a rascal. Brer Fox winked all round and said, "That will teach old Brer Rabbit to stop tricking us! When he doesn't get his butter, he'll be sorry!"

Now Brer Rabbit was as angry as a dozen Wildcats when he heard that he wasn't to share in the butter. He sat in his house and he scratched first one ear and then the other, trying to think of some way he could get that butter.

Well, he guessed if he went along that way at night he'd get that butter all right! So each night Brer Rabbit slid between the trees and came to the shed where the butter was kept. He opened the door, went to the butter-pail and scooped out a nice pat of butter. Then off he went as quietly as he had come.

Now when the creatures found their butter going every night, they knew there was a thief somewhere. And they guessed it was their old friend, Brer Rabbit!

"We'll set a trap for him!" said Brer Fox, grinning. "That's what we'll do. We'll spread the shed-floor with black soot, and old Brer Rabbit won't see it in the dark! It will get on to his shoes, and in the morning we'll see a sooty track leading back to his house—then we'll all know who the thief is!"

Well, every one thought that was a fine idea, and Brer Wolf, he swept his chimney, put the soot into a sack and took it along to the butter-shed. He spread the floor with the soot and went away.

Now that night along came Brer Rabbit as usual for his pat of butter. It was dark and he couldn't see the soot—but he could smell it all right! Oh yes, Brer Rabbit knew the smell of fresh soot, and he stood there in the shed and sniffed hard.

"Soot on the floor!" said Brer Rabbit, and he grinned to himself. "Put there to catch me! Ha, they think they'll see my sooty footsteps leading to

my house—and they'll come and say I steal the butter. No, no, Brer Fox, you can't trick me so easily as that!"

Brer Rabbit took his pat of butter and skipped out on his sooty feet. He walked as heavily as he could to a tree. Then he took off his sooty shoes and pressed them hard against the tree-trunk so that it looked for all the world as if some one had been walking up there!

Then Brer Rabbit skipped home in his bare feet, carrying the shoes, as happy as a jay-bird!

The next morning the creatures were excited to see the sooty footmarks. They all followed them till they came to the tree, and they were *most* astonished to see the footprints going up the trunk!

"Queer!" said Brer Fox, looking hard at them.

"The thief must live up in this tree," said Brer Wolf, peering up. "But only Cousin Wildcat lives in trees."

"Well, one of us must go up and see who lives here," said Brer Bear. "Brer Turkey-Buzzard, you fly up and see what you can find."

So Brer Turkey-Buzzard flew up, but though he spent hours looking into every hole and along every branch, he simply could *not* find the thief!

Well, the next night Brer Rabbit skipped along for his butter again, and walked hard on the soot. When he left the shed he walked along to the bank of the river. Then he took off his shoes and ran along home in his bare feet once more.

The next day all the animals found the sooty footprints once again, and followed them in glee. This time they would surely find the thief!

“The footmarks stop just here!” said Brer Fox in astonishment, and he pointed to the bank of the river. “Maybe Brer Terrapin, or his Uncle Mud-Turtle, is the thief!”

“Indeed we’re not!” said Brer Terrapin, who had come along with the others. “Last night we were at a party at Mr. Benjamin Ram’s, as he’ll tell you. We didn’t go near the butter-shed!”

“Well, it’s a strange thing,” said Brer Wolf, puzzled. “First those footsteps lead us to a tree—and now they lead us to a river!”

The next night Brer Rabbit fetched his butter and danced off in his sooty shoes. He skipped along till he came to the middle of a field, then he took off his shoes and ran home.

And when the creatures found the footmarks stopping in the middle of the field, they looked at one another in amazement.

“Well, the thief must have wings!” said Brer Fox. “He couldn’t just disappear like that! I wonder if it’s Brer Turkey-Buzzard.”

“No, it isn’t,” said Brer Turkey-Buzzard indignantly. “I was away at my uncle’s all last night, as he will tell you.”

Now just then along came old Brer Rabbit, and he saw all the animals looking puzzled and talking to one another. So he skipped up and said how-do to them.

“What’s puzzling you?” he asked. “You tell me, and I’ll help you!”

So they told him about the missing butter, and how they couldn’t make out who the thief was because one time he walked up a tree, and another time he went into the river, and the third time he just disappeared in the middle of a field!

“You let *me* keep your butter for you in my shed and it’ll be all right!” said Brer Rabbit. “I guess no thief will dare to come around tricking *me*! You let *me* take care of the butter!”

“Well, we’ll pay you a pat of butter each day if you’ll keep the thief away,” said Brer Fox. “But if you don’t, you won’t get any butter, Brer Rabbit!”

“You trust me to keep the thief away!” grinned old Brer Rabbit. “I won’t need any soot to catch him either! The thief’s afraid of me! I’m fierce, I am, and no one will take your butter!”

So the butter was moved to Brer Rabbit’s shed, and the creatures gave him a large piece of it every day for keeping it safe. No thief came near it, of course, so the creatures were very pleased.

“Oh, Brer Rabbit’s a mighty fierce fellow!” they said to each other. “No thief dares to get our butter now!”

And they wondered why old Brer Rabbit grinned when he heard them. He’s a rascal, isn’t he?

XXVII. Brer Fox’s New House

IT HAPPENED once that old Brer Fox got himself a fine new house. My, wasn’t he proud of it too! He called it Bushy Villa, after his tail, and he got Mrs. Bear to make him some blue curtains.

Now Brer Rabbit had wanted the house for himself, and he was in a great rage when he found that Brer Fox had walked in and taken it.

He set off to the house and knocked at the door, blim-blam!

“Who’s there?” called Brer Fox.

“Brer Rabbit!” said Brer Rabbit.

“Come right in, Brer Rabbit!” sang out Brer Fox. But Brer Rabbit knew better than that. He just stood out there on the doorstep and shouted.

“Brer Fox! I’d like this house myself. I’ve come to offer you a good price for it.”

“Then you can think again, Brer Rabbit,” said Brer Fox, pleased to find that he had got something that Brer Rabbit wanted. “I’m in this house and here I stay! Good morning to you!”

Brer Rabbit was in a fine rage. He set off home, thinking with all his brains—and he had a good many. As he went along, head down and ears up, who should he meet but Brer Terrapin, the same old one-and-sixpence!

“How-do, Brer Rabbit,” yelled out Brer Terrapin. “Look where you’re going!”

“How do, Brer Terrapin!” said Brer Rabbit, stopping and grinning at his old friend. “Why, Brer Terrapin, you are just the person I want to see. I’ve got a plan.”

Brer Terrapin walked along by Brer Rabbit, listening to his plan of getting Brer Fox out of the house. “You see, Brer Terrapin, if I can frighten him away, he’ll sell it to me,” said Brer Rabbit. “Now what about me sitting up on the roof and hanging things down the chimney when Brer Fox is sitting there reading his paper? Don’t you think that would give him a shock?”

“I should just think it would!” said Brer Terrapin. “And what about me sitting there with him that evening and pretending I can’t see anything coming down the chimney? That would be funnier still.”

So it was arranged that Brer Terrapin should drop in at Brer Fox’s house the next evening, and that Brer Rabbit should sit up on the roof with a fishing-line and drop things down on the end of the string.

“I’ll tie my old tin teapot on first,” giggled Brer Rabbit. “Then I’ll tie an old boot. And then I’ll tie Brer Fox’s own hat. I’ll slip into the hall and get it, once you are sitting talking to him, Brer Terrapin. That will give him a shock all right!”

Well, the next evening Brer Terrapin ambled along to Brer Fox’s, and knocked at the door, blim, blam! Brer Fox was pleased to see him and asked him in. “

“I’ve got a good fire, Brer Terrapin,” he said. “Come along in and warm your toes.”

As soon as they were safely in the parlour, Brer Rabbit crept into the hall and took Brer Fox’s best hat. Then, with his old tin teapot under his arm, and a dirty old boot and his fishing-line in his pocket, he climbed quietly up to the roof. He sat beside the chimney and cocked his ear up to hear what Brer Terrapin was saying to Brer Fox.

“You know, Brer Fox,” Brer Terrapin was saying, “this house feels kind of funny to me. I guess I wouldn’t like to live in it myself!”

“Pooh!” said Brer Fox; “you don’t know what you are talking about, Brer Terrapin. This house is just an ordinary, comfortable place, with nothing queer about it at all.”

“There’ll be something queer mighty soon!” said Brer Rabbit to himself, and he tied the tin teapot on to the end of his line. He dropped the line carefully down the chimney, and the teapot rattled against the bricks all the way down, clitter-clatter, clitter-clatter!

Brer Fox heard the noise and looked surprised. Brer Terrapin sucked at his old pipe and pretended to hear nothing at all. Down the chimney came the tin teapot and swung over the flames, just near Brer Fox’s nose.

Brer Fox stared as if he couldn’t believe his eyes. A teapot! Down the chimney! Hanging there as if by magic! Now what could be the meaning of

that?

He spoke to Brer Terrapin in a low voice. “Brer Terrapin! What do you suppose that tin teapot is doing in my chimney?”

Brer Terrapin turned and stared at Brer Fox as if he were greatly surprised. “Tin teapot!” he said. “What are you talking about, Brer Fox? Tin teapot, indeed! You’ll be telling me it’s dancing a jig next!”

Brer Rabbit, up on the roof, grinned when he heard that. He at once jerked his line and the teapot jumped up and down for all the world as if it were dancing a jig. Brer Fox clutched his whiskers and groaned.

“It *is* dancing a jig!” he said. “Brer Terrapin, do just look! Surely you can see a tin teapot dancing about in the chimney?”

Brer Terrapin turned towards the chimney and shut his eyes. “No,” he said truthfully, “I can’t see any teapot there, Brer Fox. Are you playing a joke on me?”

The teapot disappeared, and Brer Fox heaved a sigh. “Well, it’s gone now,” he said. “What a peculiar thing! A teapot in my chimney, and you don’t see it, Brer Terrapin!”

“Don’t you tell that kind of story to an old chap like me,” said Brer Terrapin, settling himself more comfortably in his chair. “It’s no good you expecting me to believe tales of teapots, Brer Fox, nor of anything else either!”

Slither-slither-slosh! Down the chimney came the old boot, tied tightly to the end of the string! Brer Fox leapt up from his chair in fright and stared at it.

“There’s a boot now!” he cried. “Can’t you see it, Brer Terrapin?”

“No, that I can’t,” said Brer Terrapin, looking at the chimney with his eyes shut again. “I can’t see a thing. Do sit down, Brer Fox, and don’t keep jumping and shouting. You make me quite uncomfortable.”

“Well, I’m not used to teapots and boots jigging in my chimney-place,” said Brer Fox fiercely. “You said there was something funny about this house, Brer Terrapin, and so there is. I don’t like it.”

“Sit down, Brer Fox, sit down,” begged Brer Terrapin, sucking at his pipe. “How can a man enjoy his pipe when you keep shouting about teapots and boots I can’t see? Don’t be silly.”

The boot disappeared. Brer Fox stared at the chimney-place for a while and then sat down on the edge of his seat, watching the chimney. No sooner had he sat down than the boot slithered down again, and poor Brer Fox shot out of his seat, fell over Brer Terrapin, and sat down heavily on the floor.

Brer Terrapin wanted to laugh but he dared not. “Goodness gracious, Brer Fox, what are you doing now?” he said. “Something else come down the chimney? Well, well, well, I don’t know what you wanted to buy this house for! I heard that Brer Rabbit wanted it, and I’m sure I don’t know why you didn’t let him have it.”

“I don’t know why either,” groaned Brer Fox. “I’d sell it to him now, I know that!”

Brer Rabbit grinned in delight. He tied the fine new hat on to the end of his line, and let that down the chimney too Swish-swish-swish it came, sweeping all the soot on to the brim as it went, so that Brer Fox's fine hat looked very sorry for itself when at last it appeared in the fireplace.

Brer Fox stared In horror. “Look, Brer Terrapin, look!” he said. “,There’s my new hat! Oh my, oh my, it’s new hat! I can’t bear it! I can’t bear it!”

Brer Rabbit leant right over the chimney and nearly burst himself with laughing. But he didn’t know what was going to happen next! Brer Fox was so wild at seeing his beautiful new hat dancing in the chimney covered with soot that he suddenly made a dart at it and caught hold of it! He pulled hard —and Brer Rabbit overbalanced and fell right into the chimney himself! Down he went, slither-swish, and landed in the hearth. He gave a great yell when he sat on the flames, and shot off like a bullet out of a gun!

Even Brer Terrapin got a shock that time, and he ran out of the house faster than any terrapin ran before. Brer Fox was scared too, for he wondered what was coming down the chimney *this* time! But when he saw it was Brer Rabbit, he was after him like lightning.

And Brer Rabbit lost a few hairs out of his tail that night, he was so nearly caught. He didn’t get Brer Fox’s house after all, and how he shook his fist when Brer Fox met him and called after him, “Hie! Sweep! Would you like to come and do my chimneys for me?”

Aha, Brer Rabbit, you didn’t win *that* time!

The End

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